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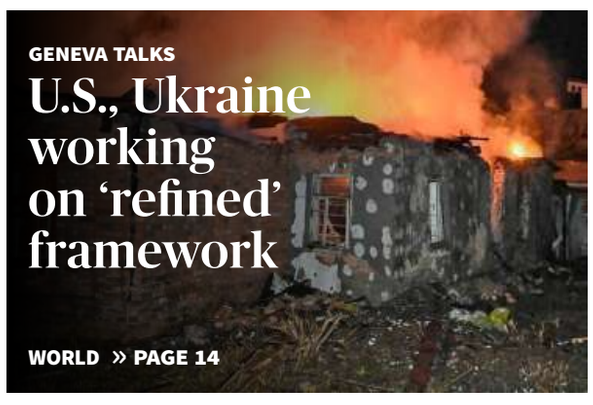
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Volcanic eruption likely to impact Indian travellers

NEW DELHI
India is bracing for potential disruption to air travel with volcanic ash from Sunday's eruption of Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano forecast to drift towards mainland India. The DGCA has issued advisories to airlines. » PAGE 6

Goa tops in digitisation of SIR forms, Kerala lags

Election Commission says enumeration forms of 99.07% people have been collected and over 47% of them digitised; BLOs race against time to finish exercise, many complain of 'excess workload'

Vijaita Singh
Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

With 10 days remaining to complete the enumeration phase of the second round of the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the Election Commission on Monday said more than 47% of the enumeration forms distributed across 12 States and Union Territories have been digitised.

Goa has achieved the highest digitisation at 76.89% followed by Rajasthan at 72.20%, while Kerala and Uttar Pradesh have the lowest at 23% and 26.6% respectively.

The enumeration phase, which began on November 4, will end on December 4. The draft list will be published on December 9 following which the period for claims and objections will begin.

According to the EC, out of the 51 crore voters being covered in this SIR, enumeration forms of 50,50,24,723, or 99.07%, have been collected and 24,13,75,229 (47.35%) have been digitised. The enumeration phase involves distribution of forms, collection of the filled ones, and uploading the data on the commission's website.

The whole exercise is being done by booth-level officers (BLOs), making them the most important cog in the wheel. However, the BLOs are racing against time. While some States such as West Bengal have witnessed protests over 'excess workload', there have been some reports of suicides by BLOs over alleged work-related stress.

In Kerala, a BLO, who complained of stress, was offered to quit SIR duties. However, he has expressed willingness to continue.

A correspondent from *The Hindu* visited a tehsil office in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh and saw BLOs swarm a camp being run by district authorities to monitor the implementation of the SIR. Most were seeking clarifications from senior officials on uploading of documents.

"How are we supposed to fill so many forms in such a short span of time. I am a teacher. Do I complete the syllabus or fill these forms? I am 55-years-old and do not have the technological wherewithal to understand all this," an anguished Manju Devi told *The Hindu*.

She said she was confused with the process as forms were being distributed only to those who had voted in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. "What is the point of conducting the exercise then? When we upload the data, sometimes it throws up similar names," she said.

Currently, the SIR is being held in Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep.



Collecting information: Special intensive revision (SIR) camps were held across Chennai on Monday. B. VELANKANNI RAJ

BLO threatens to kill himself over SIR workload

KOTTAYAM
In another instance of a booth level officer expressing distress over the mounting workload from the special intensive revision, an official from Kottayam district of Kerala threatened to take his own life, citing pressure associated with the exercise. » PAGE 3

Bollywood's beloved icon Dharmendra is no more

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Veteran actor Dharmendra Kewal Krishan Deol, affectionately known as Dharmendra, passed away in Mumbai on Monday.

The 89-year-old Bollywood legend had been in and out of Mumbai's Breach Candy hospital several days earlier this month. He was later discharged and continued his treatment at home.

On Monday, a police statement said that the actor passed away in the morning, and funeral arrangements were being made at the Shree Vile Parle Seva Samaj crematorium.

The actor is survived by his wives Prakash Kaur and Hema Malini, sons Sunny and Bobby Deol, and daughters Vijeta, Ajeeta, Esha and Ahana. Fans thronged the crematorium area causing traffic snarls.

Celebrities, including Salman Khan, Salim Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Amitabh Bachchan, Jaya Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan, Sanjay Dutt, Govinda, Shatrughan Sinha, Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh, Karan Johar, Vicky Kaushal, Shabana Azmi, Akshay Kumar, Kajol, Kareena Kapoor, Chiranjeevi, Saira Banu and others, were present at the crematorium.

Dharmendra's cinematic journey spanned more than six decades, with over 300 films to his credit. Known to fans as Bollywood's "He-Man", "Garam Dharam", and the "Action King," he combined mass appeal with versatility, effortlessly moving between action dramas, comedies, and socially relevant films.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote on X that Dharmendra's demise "marks the end of an era in Indian cinema", calling him an iconic actor admired for his versatility, simplicity, and warmth.

He offered condolences to the actor's family, friends, and fans, concluding with 'Om Shanti.'

In her condolence message, President Droupadi Murmu said Dharmendra's demise is "a great loss to Indian cinema", remembering him as one of the most popular actors whose legacy will inspire generations.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah called Dharmendra's passing "an irreparable loss to Indian cinema", praising his six-decade-long career and the ability to bring every character to life.

He remembered Dharmendra's humble beginnings and said his art will keep him alive in the hearts of millions.

RELATED REPORTS ON
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DHARMENDRA (1935 - 2025)

Goa government does a U-turn on 'permanent' tiger presence in State

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The answer to whether tigers "reside" in Goa depends on who is asking the question. The Goa Government, earlier this year, argued before a Supreme Court-appointed committee that there was "...no permanent presence of tigers" in the State.

However, in a separate matter concerning a dispute involving Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra over the sharing of water from the Mahadayi river in Goa, it stated the opposite.

"...The State of Goa states that there is evidence to show that tigers in Goa are not merely transient animals, but are a resident population, and the forests around Chorla, Mann and Kankumbi comprise a contiguous tiger landscape corridor, to the Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary in Karnataka to its south-east and the Anshi Dandeli Tiger Reserve to its south that has around 35 tigers." The latter appears in a 2018 report of the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal. "Thus, were the flow of Mahadayi river to be impeded," Goa argued," it would impact the prey base as well as tiger ecosystem".

The issue of tiger presence (or absence) in Goa has come to the fore following the Goa government challenging a July 2023 order of the Bombay High Court that directed the State to declare the Mhadei sanctuary and other connected regions – as recommended by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA, the nodal Central body tasked with overseeing tiger conservation) – a 'tiger reserve' within three months.



The Goa government says only three tigers were found through 'camera trapping' during the NTCA survey of 2018. PTI

The Goa government filed a special leave petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court challenging this order. Its core arguments in the SLP are that, as per the NTCA guidelines, an area of 800-1,000 sq. kms would have to be declared an inviolate space for a tiger reserve. The area already under protection in the State, in the form of parks and sanctuaries, added up to 745 sq. km. "Therefore, to declare an area larger than the already protected area an inviolate space would be an aberration."

Secondly, the area that would have to be declared a tiger reserve had a "huge population" of about 1,00,000 individuals spread across several villages. Given the paucity of alternative areas to settle them and the 'unwillingness' of this resident population, the move could translate to social unrest.

In terms of tiger presence, it argued that only three tigers were found through 'camera trapping' during the NTCA's tiger estimation survey of 2018. There was "no evidence" that these tigers were "residents" of the area; there were no cubs or young animals either.

"The protected area is only a corridor whereby the tigers transit from Maharashtra to Karnataka or *vice versa*, and the area of Mhadei is only a route, which is used by tigers to transit," the State argued in its petition. "Such 'transitory presence' of tigers in Mhadei was due to very few deer (as prey), and thus, declaring Mhadei sanctuary as a reserve... would not serve any significant purpose," it said.

SC seeks report

The Supreme Court, this September, directed a Central Empowered Committee of the Union Environment Ministry to hear all the "stakeholders" in the matter and submit a report in "six weeks." The Committee has reportedly sought an extension to file this.

The case traces back to 2011, when the Centre and the NTCA made multiple requests to the State of Goa to notify Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and certain other adjacent areas as a tiger reserve. But this did not happen.

In January 2021, four tigers were found poisoned following which the Goa Foundation, a non-profit, filed a petition for the region to be declared a tiger reserve. Doing so puts the onus on the State to improve protection measures for conservation of animals.

On September 8, 2025, after counsel for the Goa Foundation informed the top court that some proposals for resorts were being approved in the proposed tiger reserve, the court stayed all such activity till final order and judgment.

The sea beckons



Grand debut: Navy officials with Chief of the Army Staff Upendra Dwivedi during the commissioning ceremony of *INS Mahe*, the first of the Mahe-class anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft, in Mumbai on Monday. EMMANUAL YOGINI (REPORT ON PAGE 6)

Supreme Court to examine petition to stop cash donations to political parties

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to examine a petition to stop cash donations of even up to ₹2,000 to parties for the sake of transparency, and to bring every political contribution, no matter what the amount, under the income tax regime.

A Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notice on the plea that the Election Commission must not spare parties from disclosing even cash donations up to ₹2,000, and they should be made to divulge complete details of their donors.

"Political parties must disclose the name and all other particulars of the person paying any amount of money to it and no amount can be received in cash so as to maintain transparency in the political funding," the petition said.

The petition has arraigned, besides the EC, the Union government, Central Board of Direct Taxes and 13 parties, including the BJP, Congress, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Trinamool Congress, Samajwadi Party, AAP, as respondents.

The petition, filed by Khem Singh Bhati, challenged the legality of clause (d) of Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Section 13A is a special provision permitting tax exemption to political parties.

Clause (d) of the provision allows parties to accept donations worth ₹2,000 in cash.

INBRIEF



One year on, Sambhal stays peaceful amid tight security

The police held flag marches and maintained vigil in Sambhal on Monday, marking the first anniversary of the violence that unfolded in the west Uttar Pradesh district last November when a court-ordered survey of a 16th-century Jama Masjid, allegedly the site of an older temple, triggered large-scale protests, leaving five persons dead. Police teams, 19 Magistrates, units of the Rapid Action Force and two battalions of the Provincial Armed Constabulary were deployed in the district to maintain order, said a senior officer, adding that no untoward incident was reported during the day.

Gujarat police complete verification of 31,834 people

A Statewide audit of people once booked for 'anti-national' activities has given Gujarat police a clear picture of how many of them remain within the reach of law enforcement. The verification drive, covering three decades of cases, has now been completed, Director General of Police Vikas Sahay said on Monday. Police records showed 31,834 people had been booked over the last 30 years under laws dealing with terrorism, arms, narcotics, explosives, petroleum products and fake currency. In the verification that followed, 11,880 were found to be living at the addresses listed in the case files, while 2,326 had died, Mr. Sahay said.

PM Modi to hoist flag atop Ram Temple today to mark its completion

Ahead of visit, U.P. CM Yogi Adityanath conducts on-site review; nearly 7,000 security personnel deployed in Ayodhya city while State police and SSB intensify vigil along the India-Nepal border

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

Ayodhya is all set to receive Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to land in the temple city on Tuesday for the *Dhwaja Rohan* (flag hoisting) ceremony to signify completion of the Ram Temple construction.

The event will be attended by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

During his visit, Mr. Modi will first greet the people of Ayodhya and then proceed to the temple. Around noon, he will hoist the triangular saffron flag atop the temple. Around 10 a.m., he will visit the Saptmandir complex to offer prayers at various temples and then offer prayers in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram Temple, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). The Prime Minister will hoist the 10-foot-high, 20-foot-long triangular saffron flag atop the temple. He will also address a gathering on the occasion.



The Ram Temple illuminated on the eve of the flag hoisting ceremony on Monday in Ayodhya. ANI/ @SHRIRAMTEERTH X

The flag will be raised on the spire of the temple, built in the traditional north Indian Nagara architectural style. Surrounding it is an 800-metre enclosure crafted in south Indian architecture, reflecting India's rich architectural diversity. The outer walls of the main shrine display 87 carved stone panels depicting episodes from Lord Rama's life based on the *Valmiki Ramayana*, while 79 bronze panels on the perimeter illustrate scenes from India's cultural traditions.

Ahead of his visit, Mr. Adityanath on Monday conducted an on-site review to ensure seamless planning and arrangements and passed necessary directions to the concerned officials, a statement issued by the U.P government said.

A total of 6,970 security personnel have been deployed in the holy city as part of heightened security measures and anti-drone technology and advanced monitoring systems are also operational on the temple premises and surrounding areas.

Personnel tasked with crowd management, security screening, explosives detection, and emergency response have been stationed across key locations.

Special units, including bomb squads, dog squads, VVIP protection teams, fire units, and rapid response teams, are active in the city, according to the U.P. government statement. The U.P. Police and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) have also intensified vigil along the India-Nepal border here ahead of Mr. Modi's Ayodhya visit.

Maharajganj Superintendent of Police Somendra Meena said security agencies have been instructed to verify the identities of people crossing the border to prevent the movement of terrorists.

(With inputs from PTI)

Hardly any incident of crop burning in past 10 days: official

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI



Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi. FILE PHOTO

Stubble burning incidents in Delhi-NCR, Punjab and Haryana have reduced this year due to government support for farm machinery and other measures, Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi said on Monday.

The government has provided farmers with relevant equipment and necessary interventions to tackle the problem, Mr. Chaturvedi told reporters on the sidelines of an event. There have hardly been incidents of stubble burning in the past ten days, he said.

Stubble burning by farmers in northern India after harvesting their crops has been a major contributor to severe air pollution in Delhi and surrounding areas during winter months.

When asked about other pollution sources, Mr. Chaturvedi said other Ministries were better placed to comment on it.

As per data maintained by ICAR's Consortium for Research on Agroecosystem Monitoring and Modeling from Space (CREAMS), the overall crop residue burning incidents have come down by 15% to 27,720 between September 15 and November 23, from 32,596 in the year-ago period.

However, burning incidents rose in Uttar Pradesh to 5,622 from 4,298 and in Rajasthan to 2,804 from 2,622 during the period, the data showed.

Highest in M.P.

Madhya Pradesh recorded the highest number of incidents at 13,584, though down slightly from 13,796 a year earlier.

On November 23, satellites detected 1,154 residue burning events across the six States, with Madhya Pradesh accounting for 607 and Uttar Pradesh 522. Punjab reported three incidents, Haryana one and Delhi none.

TVK leaders questioned by CBI in Karur stampede case

The Hindu Bureau
KARUR

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) general secretary 'Bussy' Anand, general secretary (election campaign management) Aadhav Arjuna, and joint general secretary C.T.R. Nirmal Kumar appeared before the CBI in Karur on Monday for questioning in connection with the September 27 stampede, which claimed 41 lives at a rally addressed by party founder and actor Vijay.

According to sources, the CBI questioned the TVK office-bearers until 8.15 p.m., seeking detailed accounts of crowd control measures, and the roles and responsibilities assigned on the day of the rally.

Either extend deadline for filing objections in electoral rolls or cancel polls: Thackeray cousins

Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI



Sharing a bond: Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray. FILE PHOTO

Thackeray cousins, Uddhav and Raj, shot a letter to the Maharashtra State Election Commissioner Dinesh Waghmare on Monday, seeking to extend the deadline for raising objections and suggestions over the problems in the voters' rolls by 21 days or cancel the local body elections.

"People of Maharashtra know that you are not honest about your job. You call yourself independent. You must show it. We believe that you have conscience. Respect it. The people of Maharashtra will be indebted to you," the letter stated.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray met Mr. Waghmare on behalf of the two parties, and handed over the letter to him.

"The list which has come out now is not machine-readable. Wards have been shuffled depending on the strength of the BJP," he said after meeting Mr. Waghmare.

He claimed that there were bigger problems with the lists, adding that in one ward in Mumbai, the names of over 6,000 people, who were either below 18 or above 100 years of age, were found.He said that since the seven days' period to raise objections was insufficient, that period should be extended to 21 days. He also said the SEC should give permission to political parties to raise objections en-masse.

Assam govt. to table unofficial Mehta panel report on 1983 poll violence in House: CM

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said an unofficial judicial panel report on the election-related violence in 1983 would be tabled before the 126-member State Assembly.

The report of Justice (retired) T.U. Mehta, constituted by a civil society group, will be tabled along with the official report of Tribhuvan Prasad Tewary Commission when the House sits for a five-day session.

"Placing a non-government report will be a first for the Assembly. We decided to table the Mehta Commission report on the 1983 election-related violence following a demand from the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), which argued that the document should be made public so that people can get to know all sides," the Chief Minister said after a Cabinet meeting on Sunday night.



Himanta Biswa Sarma

The Mehta Commission was constituted by Assam Rajyik Freedom Fighters' Association to examine the Nellie massacre and other incidents of violence related to the controversial election in 1983 during the peak of the anti-infiltration Assam agitation (1979-1985), which culminated in the signing of the Assam Accord in 1985.

The Mehta panel conducted 36 sittings, examined 600 witnesses, and submitted its report in January 1985.

More than 2,000 people were killed and about three lakh others were displaced during the elections held in February 1983.

"Piece of history"

"Both the Tewary Commission and Mehta Commission reports are valuable documents and the youths of Assam must know about them," the Chief Minister said, insisting that the Tewary Commission was "generally neutral" despite having been commissioned by the Congress government.

The Chief Minister criticised the Congress for suggesting that the reports contain politically sensitive material.

Cautionary note

Prominent citizens have advised the government against turning the Tewary panel report into a political tool, warning that the selective use of its findings could stoke tensions rather than resolving the long-standing concerns over illegal migration.

Senior advocate Santanu Barthakur warned that discussing isolated sections of the report could trigger "a seriously adverse reaction".

He said the State government should focus on addressing public anxieties over illegal migration and implementing pending safeguards for indigenous communities under Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

Amid ongoing SIR in Bengal, Matuas stage hunger strike, seek citizenship under CAA

Shrabana Chatterjee
Moyurie Som
THAKURNAGAR (WEST BENGAL)



Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Mamata Bala Thakur holding a hunger strike with members of the Matua community at Thakurnagar to protest against the SIR; (right) a camp set up by the BJP in the area for Matuas to apply for citizenship under the CAA. SHRABANA CHATTERJEE

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will visit Thakurnagar, the spiritual headquarters of the Matua community in Bongaon subdivision of North 24 Parganas district bordering Bangladesh, on Tuesday and take out a 3-km roadshow before addressing a public meeting.

This will be the second time Ms. Banerjee will be taking to the streets against the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls since the exercise was rolled out in the State on November 4.

The Chief Minister's visit assumes significance as the community, comprising Hindu Namashudras with roots in Bangladesh, are among groups of people apprehensive about the SIR in the State. Ahead of the 2026 Assembly election, the ruling Trinamool Congress is trying to reach out to the minority community that voted for the BJP in the past two Lok Sabha polls. The Trinamool has recently gained ground in the region by defeating the BJP in the 2024 bypolls.

Since November 5, a section of members of the Matua community led by Trinamool Rajya Sabha member Mamata Bala Thakur has been staging a hunger strike at Thakurnagar. According to Ms. Mamata Bala, members of the community are concerned as the Election Commission is using the 2002 voters' list as the base for the SIR.

'Dying of fear'

"There are many of us who have all the documents, but do not have our names on the 2002 voters' list. We are dying of fear. Many of us came from Bangladesh at a time of distress; we had nothing but the clothes on our body," Ms. Bala told *The Hindu*.

The Trinamool lawmaker also asked how people without families will produce documents of parents to prove their citizenship. The SIR has pushed several people from the community to apply for citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA).

Not far from the protest site, BJP lawmaker from Bongaon and Union Minister Santanu Thakur has set up a camp for Matuas to apply for citizenship under the CAA. Mr. Santanu and Ms. Mamata Bala hail from the family of Harichand Thakur and Guruchand Thakur, who founded the Matua sect at Orakandi in present-day Bangladesh in the late 19th century.

The Matuas began migrating from Bangladesh in 1947 and continued to arrive in India both before and after the war in 1971 that liberated what was then East Pakistan from West Pakistan. In West Bengal, the community has a considerable presence in border districts such as 24 Parganas, Nadia, Howrah, Cooch Behar and Malda, and are the State's second largest Scheduled Caste community.

The CAA, which was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019, facilitates citizenship to undocumented migrants belonging to six non-Muslim communities – Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian - from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014. The CAA Rules were notified on March 11, 2024, coinciding with the birth anniversary of the founder of the Matua sect.

The CAA Rules specify several documents that are to be uploaded on an online portal (indiancitizenshiponline.nic.in/) in order to process the application.

A sworn affidavit declaring the country of origin and date of entry into India along with an eligibility certificate to be issued by a locally reputed community institution certifying that a person follows one of the six faiths are mandatory.

"We will appeal to the Election Commission not to remove from the new electoral roll the names of those who do not figure in the 2002 voters' list," Mr. Santanu said, assuring members of his section of the community that their voting rights will not be snatched away by the SIR.

'Taking advantage'

At the camp set up by Mr. Santanu, people are paying ₹800 to register themselves under the CAA, sparking accusations from the ruling party that the BJP is "making money from the plight of Matuas".

However, those running the camp defended the fee. "There are lawyers here who help make the affidavits for ₹300. We charge ₹250 for filling up the online form. The online application itself costs ₹50. Additionally, since the CAA is a provision for non-Muslim immigrants, we also issue a Hindu certificate for ₹100 and a Matua certificate for ₹100," said a data entry operator at the camp.

For the online application, mandatory documents include proof of address in Bangladesh and a Bangladeshi identity document, while a photostat copy of the Aadhaar card is required for the Hindu certificate and Matua card, the data entry operator said.

Gouranga Biswas, 33, expressed scepticism. "How can we trust this process when it begins with Matuas declaring themselves as Bangladeshi citizens first?"

Krishnapada Das, 47, who is registering under the CAA, said, "My forefathers migrated in the 1970s and my parents' names are on the 2002 voters' list. However, we do not know what might happen during the SIR, so we thought of getting registered under the CAA."

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INBRIEF



Andhra Pradesh to issue Smart Family Cards by 2026

The Andhra Pradesh government is preparing to roll out the Family Benefit Management System (FBMS), a comprehensive data-driven framework that treats every household as a single unit for the delivery of welfare schemes and public services. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who reviewed the initiative at the Secretariat on Monday, directed officials to complete data integration and issue Smart Family Cards to all 1.4 crore families in the State by June next year.

LDF candidates win unopposed in two wards

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) has won unopposed in two more wards of the Anthoor municipality in Kannur district of Kerala as Communist Party of India (Marxist) candidates E. Rajitha and K.V. Premarajan remain unopposed in Kodallur and Thali wards. The LDF has now won five seats unopposed in Anthoor. This comes after nomination papers of United Democratic Front (UDF) candidates were rejected, as the signatures were found to be forged.

LCA Tejas crash in Dubai an isolated occurrence: HAL

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) on Monday said that the recent crash of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas during the Dubai Air Show was "an isolated occurrence"arising out of exceptional circumstances. "We would like to assure that there is no impact on the Company's business operations or its future deliveries. The Company is extending its full support and cooperation to the agencies conducting the investigation," it said in a statement.

BLO threatens to end life in Kerala; officials come to aid

The officer is heard saying that he is facing severe stress and harsh working conditions as part of the SIR duties; two staff members from the village office have been assigned to assist him

The Hindu Bureau
KOTTAYAM

In yet another instance of a booth level officer (BLO) expressing his distress over the mounting workload from the special intensive revision (SIR), an official from the Poonjar grama panchayat in Kottayam district of Kerala threatened to take his own life, citing unbearable pressure associated with the exercise.

The official, identified as Antony Varghese, a BLO for booth number 110 in the Poonjar Assembly constituency, alleged that he was facing severe stress and harsh working conditions as part of SIR duties.



Helping hand: A Booth Level Officer (BLO) at a help desk assists voters with their enumeration forms. REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO

In an audio note shared in an official WhatsApp group, Mr. Varghese is heard saying that the workload involved in the SIR has pushed him to the brink. "If I commit suicide, this Election Commission and the SIR will be responsible," he says.

An employee with the Government Polytechnic College in Idukki, Mr. Varghese has been involved in the door-to-door verification process.

Revenue department officials on Monday reached out to Mr. Varghese. They informed him that he could be relieved from duty, but Mr. Varghese said he preferred to continue. "The entire department is ready to support him," deputy tahsildar, Niju Mon, said. Two staff members from the Mundakkayam village office have been assigned to assist him.

On November 16, Aneesh George, a BLO from Kannur, died by suicide, reportedly due to pressure from SIR duties.

(For those in distress, counselling is available at TeleMANAS-14416)

All eyes on Rahul Gandhi to decide on leadership change in Karnataka

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With the Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge shifting the decision on leadership issue to the party high command, all eyes are now on Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi. The second set of legislators, aligned to Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, is now camping in Delhi to bring pressure on central leaders.

However, those close to the Chief Minister Siddaramaiah maintained that discussion would take place on Cabinet reshuffle and not related to leadership.

Seen together

Amid these hectic developments, Mr. Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar were seen together sharing the dais at a government function in Chickballapur, near here, on Monday.

Speaking to reporters, the Chief Minister reiterated that he would abide by the high command's decision. "If they decide I should continue, I will continue. Both Mr. Shivakumar and I have to accept what high commands decide." Responding to this, his deputy said, "What Mr. Siddaramaiah says is *Veda Vakya* to all of us and he is our party's asset."

Party sources said that Mr. Kharge was likely to brief Mr. Gandhi in a couple of days following which both Mr. Siddaramaiah and Mr. Shivakumar may be called for consultations.

Until Mr. Gandhi took a decision, nothing would move in the current circumstances, the sources said. Another source in the Congress said that Mr. Shivakumar was likely to meet AICC general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal to discuss the issue.

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R. Ashok on Monday alleged that "horse-trading" of MLAs had begun in the ruling Congress and claimed that ₹60 crore to ₹70 crore was being transacted, over attempts to effect leadership change.

'Voter names being deleted in Congress bastions in Rajasthan'



Congress leaders releasing the posters of the national talent search campaign in Jaipur on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Hindu Bureau
JAIPUR

The Opposition Congress in Rajasthan on Monday alleged that the names of a large number of voters were being deleted in all Assembly constituencies during the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. This was being done in areas with considerable support for the Congress, according to the party.

Pradesh Congress Committee president Govind Singh Dotasra said voters with Congress ideology were being removed from the electoral rolls on the pretext of their absence, relocation or death. "In each Assembly segment, the names of 20,000 to 25,000 voters are being deleted," he said.

Talking to journalists at the PCC headquarters here, Mr. Dotasra said the login identities of Block Level Officers (BLO) were being used at multiple locations for "arbitrary deletions and additions". "We are gathering complete information about the misuse of absentee, shifted and dead (ASD) marking. The party will shortly expose this conspiracy," Mr. Dotasra said.

He alleged that 'absentee, shifted and dead' (ASD) marking was very low in areas where the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party believes it has a strong vote bank. The data would be available by the next month to make a comparison between the final voters' lists and the previous ones used in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections, Mr. Dotasra said.

A meeting of the PCC executive and all District Congress Committee presidents has been convened in Jaipur on November 29 for the carrying out a review of the SIR exercise. Mr. Dotasra said the party would deliberate on the strategy to monitor the Election Commission's actions.

Asked about the appointments of the party's district unit chiefs, Mr. Dotasra said an adequate representation was being given to the leaders under 50 years of age as well as those belonging to SC, ST, OBC and minority communities.

The PCC also launched a talent search campaign to select spokespersons, media panellists and publicity coordinators for the party.

'Govt. liable for ceiling fan falling on a baby in Public Health Centre'

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Telangana Human Rights Commission (TGHRC) has pulled up the health authorities in Telangana's Adilabad district over an incident in which a ceiling fan fell on a newborn at the Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Gudihathnoor, causing head injuries. The Commission has held the State liable for the lapse and recommended that the mother of the child be paid a compensation of ₹50,000.

The *suo motu* case was taken up by TGHRC on the basis of media reports published in June describing how the fan collapsed onto the hospital bed in the inpatient ward.

According to Adilabad DMHO's report dated July 22, Payal Jadhav, who had been admitted to the PHC with labour pain, delivered a baby girl in the early hours of June 22. A fan detached from its hook and fell directly onto the newborn in the ward. The baby suffered a contusion on the right side of her head. She was discharged after her condition stabilised, with no neurological symptoms reported during follow-up.

The Medical Officer of the PHC informed the Commission that the fan had fallen because the bolt holding it had separated from the hook due to rust. The officer termed it an accident and claimed no negligence.

The Commission rejected the 'accident' claim and held that the State had failed in its basic duty to maintain safe public health facilities.

Golden harvest



A farmer separating the fully dried corn from the heap exposed to sunlight at Chadmad Thanda in Gandhari Mandal in Kamareddy district of Telangana on Monday. NAGARA GOPAL

Fresh chats tying MLA to 'sexual misconduct' put Cong. on the mat in Kerala

G Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

A "new" set of mobile phone audio recordings and WhatsApp chats that surfaced in the public domain on Monday appeared to reignite the serial sexual misconduct scandal centring around Palakkad MLA Rahul Mamkootathil, arguably menacing the Congress' local body election campaign at a critical juncture.

The messages and recordings of the questionable provenance convey a "threatening" male voice asking a woman to terminate her pregnancy medically against her will.



Rahul Mamkootathil

Speaking to presspersons in Palakkad, Mr. Mamkootathil said television channels had attributed the voice to him without giving him the right of reply. He also questioned the political timing of the accusations.

Mr. Mamkootathil said he welcomed any investigation when journalists told him that the alleged victim would meet Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and narrate her "exploitation and mistreatment" with digital proof.

Mr. Mamkootathil said, "I have not broken any law. I will clear the air at the appropriate time." He said he would move legally against those who are attempting to finish him off by raising allegations of sexual misbehaviour against him.

The police investigation into the allegations has remained stalled due to the lack of a complaint from the alleged victims.

Hyderabad police firm up evidence in ₹20-cr. piracy probe against Immadi Ravi

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Investigators say that he used the money from the piracy racket to purchase flats and plots

As the five-day custody questioning of Immadi Ravi, also known as 'Ibomma' Ravi, came to an end on Monday, officers from the Hyderabad police said that they have built solid evidence against him of the money flow linked to advertisement and wider data trial.

An officer involved in the probe said investigators had been tracking the movements of Immadi Ravi for weeks. According to the officer, surveillance on one associate led them finding a message confirming that Ravi was in Hyderabad.

The officer said the custody questioning allowed the team to build concrete evidence through what he described as a complete analysis of money flow, advertising links, his involvement in the betting applications and the wider data trail.

Immadi Ravi, 39, a native of Visakhapatnam, who is a citizen of Saint Kitts and Nevis, is the primary accused in the piracy racket.

Police said they seized hard drives containing nearly 21,000 films in multiple languages. Investigators believe he earned about ₹20 crore through the operation and used the money to purchase flats and plots. Roughly ₹3.5 crore in his bank accounts has been frozen as the inquiry progresses.

Japanese delegation visits ISRO to review status of Chandrayaan-5/LuPEX mission

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A Japanese delegation recently held discussions with the senior leadership of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and visited the facilities of the space agency to review the status of the Chandrayaan-5/LuPEX mission and explore future opportunities.

The Vice-Chair of Japan's Cabinet Committee on National Space Policy Saku Tsuneta called on ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan on November 21 to discuss the status of the Chandrayaan-5/ LuPEX, which is a Joint Lunar Polar Exploration mission between the ISRO and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).



Progress check: The Japanese delegation with ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan at the headquarters in Bengaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Chandrayaan-5 LuPEX mission is the fifth mission in the Chandrayaan series of lunar missions to study the lunar volatile materials, including lunar water, in the vicinity of a Permanently Shadowed Region in the lunar South pole.

According to the ISRO, the mission will be launched by JAXA onboard its H3-24L launch vehicle, carrying the ISRO-made lunar lander, which will carry the MHI, Japan-made lunar rover.

The ISRO is also responsible for developing a few scientific instruments for the mission.

The LUPEX will be a precursor to the ISRO's lunar sample return mission and for sending the first Indian to the moon by 2040.

The Japanese delegation also explored potential opportunities to work together in the field of robotic arm for space stations, launching of scientific satellites, and in supporting researchers and private companies from both nations for joint activities.

Wangchuk can join plea against NSA detention: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday allowed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk to join his wife, Gitanjali J. Angmo, in challenging his detention under the National Security Act (NSA) following violent protests on September 24 in Leh.

Appearing before a Bench headed by Justice Aravind Kumar, Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, for the government, sought time to respond to a rejoinder filed by Ms. Angmo, represented by advocate Sarvam Ritam Khare.

Mr. Khare said that since Mr. Wangchuk was himself the detainee, he should have a chance in court. The Bench agreed and adjourned the case to December 8.

The court was earlier scheduled to hear a separate application filed by Ms. Angmo alleging that the Home Ministry was unhappy with Mr. Wangchuk's participation in efforts to address the government on issues of Statehood and Sixth Schedule safeguards for Ladakh. She had argued that the detention of her husband was motivated by "malicious intent".



Extensive damage: The mangled remains of the two private buses that collided in Tamil Nadu's Tenkasi district on Monday.

Seven killed, over 60 injured as two buses collide in Tamil Nadu

The Hindu Bureau
TENKASI

Seven persons were killed and more than 60 others were injured in a head-on collision between two private buses near Duraisamypuram in Tenkasi district of Tamil Nadu on Monday.

The police said a bus bound for Kovilpatti from Tenkasi and another on its way to Tenkasi from Rajapalayam collided while passing through the village near Kadayanallur on the Madurai-Kollam National Highway.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the driver of the Tenkasi-bound bus was trying to overtake another vehicle when the accident occurred.

Five women and a man died on the spot. Eight injured persons were referred to the Tirunelveli Government Medical College and Hospital, where one of them died.

The other injured passengers were sent to the government hospital in Tenkasi for further treatment.

The mangled remains of the buses were removed with an earthmover, and traffic was restored.

In a statement Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a solatium of ₹3 lakh each to the families of the deceased and a compensation of ₹1 lakh each to those who suffered serious injuries and ₹50,000 each to those who suffered minor injuries.

Justice Surya Kant takes oath as 53rd Chief Justice

All eyes on the SIR case and pendency; he is seen as a judge who leans more towards gently nudging disputes to a resolution over time rather than taking a confrontational approach

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

Justice Surya Kant took oath as the 53rd Chief Justice of India at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Monday.

President Droupadi Murmu swore in Justice Kant merely days after Justice Kant, as a member of the 16th Presidential Reference Bench, advised her that neither she nor the State Governors, while dealing with State Bills, are bound by timelines "imposed" by the Supreme Court as in the April 8 judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor case.

Justice Kant took the oath of office in Hindi.

Both Chief Justice Kant and his immediate predecessor, Justice B.R. Gavai, was recently lauded by Solicitor- General Tushar Mehta for bringing "Indianness" in the courts. Mr. Mehta, in his address, highlighted that their judgment did not refer to foreign precedents of law and drew their reasonings from Indian case laws and legal principles in their verdicts.



President Droupadi Murmu administers the oath of office to Justice Surya Kant as the 53rd Chief Justice of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Chief Justice Kant was appointed to the Supreme Court on the same day as Justice Gavai, on May 24, 2019.

After the oath ceremony, in an act of camaraderieship and respect for the office, Justice Gavai reserved the official vehicle designated for the Chief Justice of India for Chief Justice Kant, ensuring that his successor's maiden journey to the Supreme Court as CJI was in the official car itself.

The Chief Justice is seen as a judge who leans more towards gently nudging disputes to a resolution over time rather than taking a confrontational approach. Justice (as he was then) Kant had resolved the farmers' agitation from the Bench by prodding both sides – the protesting farmers and the Union government – to the negotiating table at a critical point when matters were spiralling with farmers' leaders on an indefinite strike on the borders of Delhi.

Close watch on SIR

Chief Justice Kant's tenure would be closely watched for his handling of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) case. So far, the judicial interventions of his Bench have made the SIR procedure accessible to citizens. But it is yet to take up the basic issue of whether the exercise itself is constitutional or not. Meanwhile, the SIR has expanded from Bihar to its second phase to 12 States and Union Territories and covering 51 crore people.

Justice Kant has been a part of several impactful decisions of the apex court, including the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution which removed the special status to the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir.

Justice Kant was also part of the Bench which held the electoral bonds scheme unconstitutional. He was a member of the Benches which heard the Pegasus spyware case and suspension of the sedition law.

The Chief Justice, who has a tenure of little over a year till his retirement on February 2, 2027, has said his topmost priority would be to bring the pendency of over 90,000 cases in the top court to a manageable number.

Congress hits out at Modi over 'free fall' of rupee

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the rupee's downward slide compared with the U.S. dollar and recalled Mr. Modi's 2013 remarks on the issue when the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was in power.

On Friday, the rupee plunged 98 paise to close at its lifetime low of 89.66 against the U.S. dollar due to a huge demand for the U.S. currency in the domestic foreign exchange market amid widespread selling pressure in local and global equities and trade-related uncertainties. However, the rupee opened at 89.46 against the dollar before rising to 89.17, up 49 paise from its previous close.

"The rupee continues its free fall in relation to the dollar. It is now about to breach the 90 rupees to the USD low. Does the PM recall what he himself had said in July 2013," Congress communication chief Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X. He also shared the 2013 video in which Mr. Modi had mocked the UPA government over falling value of the rupee.



Crime and punishment: Members of the Bawaria gang being escorted to a Sessions Court in Chennai on Monday. M. SRINATH

Three get life terms for 2005 murder of MLA, dacoity in T.N.

R. Sivaraman
CHENNAI

In a sensational case relating to the 2005 murder of AIADMK MLA and former Minister K. Sudarsanam, a Sessions Court on Monday pronounced four to five "consecutive" life sentences on three members of the Bawaria gang, who were earlier convicted for dacoity, murder, and possession of illegal arms.

Pronouncing the final judgment in the 20-year-old case, XV Additional Sessions Judge L. Abraham Lincoln sentenced the trio to life imprisonments and said they would have to serve them consecutively, meaning they will spend the remainder of their life in prison.

Brazen act

According to the prosecution, around 2.30 a.m. on January 8, 2005, an armed gang broke into the house of Sudarsanam at Thanakulam in Tiruvallur district, shot him dead, and fled the spot in a lorry with cash, jewellery weighing 60 sovereigns, and mobile phones. The special teams under the then Inspector-General of Police, North, S.R. Jangid unearthed the involvement of the Bawaria gang, and the police arrested Ashok alias Laxman, 56, of Bharatpur district in Rajasthan first, and subsequently the others.

G. Sreenivasan, Additional Public Prosecutor, said: "In this case, two of main accused Oma alias Omprakash Bawaria and his brother Boora died due to illness in prison while serving a life sentence in another criminal case. Only four accused were tried in the court while three had absconded."

D. Magarajan, Additional Public Prosecutor, said: "Sixty-six witnesses were examined, and 52 exhibits and 17 material objects, including two country-made guns and two lorries, were marked during the trial."

On Monday, Jagadish, 68, alias Gunna, Rakesh alias Guddu, 55, of Haryana, and Ashok, who have been serving life imprisonments in another case, were brought to the court complex from the prison amid tight security. The fourth accused Jaildar Singh alias Lalimaster, who was out on bail, also appeared before the court.

In a jam-packed court, Mr. Abraham Lincoln read out the sentences to the men. As per the pronouncement, Jagadish will have to undergo a total of four life sentences – three for offences under Section 397 (Robbery or dacoity, with attempt to cause death or grievous hurt) and one for offences under Section 396 (Dacoity with murder) of the Indian Penal Code.

Rakesh and Ashok were sentenced to undergo five and four life imprisonments for different offences, which included dacoity with murder and illegal possession of arms. They were also fined. The fourth accused Jaildar Singh was acquitted.

In letter to Chief Ministers of three States, Maoists offer to surrender by February 15

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Deputy CM Vijay Sharma says the request will be considered if the group gives a concrete proposal

The Maharashtra-Madhya Pradesh-Chhattisgarh (MMC) special zonal committee of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) has purportedly written a letter to the Chief Ministers of three States offering to renounce weapons and accept the government's rehabilitation programme by February 15, 2026. They have, however, urged the State governments to halt the security forces' anti-Naxal operations till the date set by them.

"We, the MMC Special Zonal Committee, also wish to renounce the weapon and accept the government's rehabilitation and Poonamargam scheme. However, we request the governments of all three States to give us time. Since our party adheres to the principles of democratic centralism, it will take some time for us to collectively reach this decision," says the letter addressed to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai, Chhattisgarh Home Minister and Deputy CM Vijay Sharma, and Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav.

Pause activities

In the letter issued in the name of MMC zone spokesperson Anant and dated November 22, the Maoists have offered to pause their activities as well.

The MMC has purportedly requested the government to play its contents on the radio for the next few days so that this message can reach their colleagues as soon as possible.

Reacting to the letter, Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said that the Maoists need to make a concrete offer and also questioned the deadline mentioned in the letter.

"I have seen the letter and also listened to the audio [that has purportedly surfaced alongside the letter]. It does not take this long, and nobody has so much time. They should submit a concrete proposal." he said.

He added that the government was willing to co-operate if a concrete proposal is received within a timeline of 10 to 15 days.

Bengal CM writes to CEC on poll body's initiatives

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

Raising questions on certain initiatives issued by the Election Commission (EC), West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday wrote another letter to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and asked whether such measures were undertaken at "the behest of a political party to serve vested interests".

Ms. Banerjee's letter raised objections on two crucial points – Request for Proposal raised by the Chief Electoral Officer's office for hiring data entry operators and software developers for a period of one year, and the proposal to set up polling stations inside private housing complexes. In an earlier letter dated November 20, Ms. Banerjee had urged Mr. Kumar to halt the SIR.

Arunachal woman stopped at China airport; India issues strong demarche

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

India has issued a "strong demarche" to China after a woman from Arunachal Pradesh was harassed and stopped by Chinese immigration officials at the Shanghai airport on November 21. The officials mocked her and told her to "apply for a Chinese passport".

Sources in the External Affairs Ministry said that at a time when both sides are working to improve ties, such actions by the Chinese side introduce unnecessary obstructions to the process.

Prema Thongdok, a principal regulatory consultant working in financial services in London, told *The Hindu* that she was detained at the Shanghai airport for 18 hours, and immigration and airlines staff were "unprofessional and rude", they laughed and mocked calling Arunachal Pradesh a Chinese territory.



Prema Thongdok

Sources in Ministry said that a strong demarche was made with the Chinese side, in Beijing and in Delhi, on the day of the incident and the Indian consulate in Shanghai took up the matter locally and extended assistance to the stranded passenger.

"It was stressed that the passenger had been detained on ludicrous grounds. Arunachal Pradesh is indisputably Indian territory, and its residents are perfectly entitled to hold and travel with Indian passports. It has also been highlighted that the actions of the Chinese authorities are in contravention of the Chicago and Montreal Conventions relating to civil aviation," External Affairs Ministry sources said.

Passenger's ordeal

Ms. Thongdok was flying from London to Japan, transiting via Shanghai and was booked on a China Eastern Airlines flight. She has been residing and working in the United Kingdom for the past 14 years.

"I was travelling from London (Gatwick), United Kingdom to Japan, with a scheduled three-hour transit in Shanghai. Prior to my journey, I had verified with the Chinese Embassy that a transit of less than 24 hours does not require any transit visa... However, upon arrival in Shanghai around 6 a.m. on November 21, immigration officers refused to allow my transit and declared my Indian passport invalid solely because my place of birth is Arunachal Pradesh. They repeatedly insisted that Arunachal Pradesh is part of China," Ms. Thongdok said, adding that she was subjected to harassment, verbal intimidation, and degrading comments.

Ms. Thongdok was ultimately escorted by Indian officials to a flight late in the evening at 10.20 p.m.

INBRIEF



Delhi HC seeks Centre's reply on Christian Michel's plea

The Delhi High Court on Monday sought responses from the Union government on a plea by Christian Michel James, an alleged middleman in ₹3,600-crore AgustaWestland VVIP chopper scam case, challenging a provision of the India-UAE extradition treaty. A Bench of Justices Vivek Chaudhary and Manoj Jain sought response from the Centre to file their objections regarding maintainability of Mr. Michel's petition. Mr. Michel has contested Article 17, which allows India to prosecute an extradited person not only for the offence for which extradition was granted but also for related offences.

Rabri moves Delhi court seeking transfer of case

Former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi on Monday moved to a Delhi court to seek transfer of multiple cases filed against her and her family from the judge who had framed charges against them in the alleged IRCTC scam case. In her application submitted in the court of Principal District and Sessions Judge of the Rouse Avenue Courts, Ms. Devi sought transfer of four cases pending before special Judge Vishal Gogne. The former Chief Minister has accused him of being biased and conducting the trials against her and her family with a premeditated mind. Judge Gogne is now dealing with the alleged scam, cash-for-jobs case and the money laundering proceedings associated with the Yadav family.

RJD issues notices to Bhojpuri singers for 'offensive' songs

The Rashtriya Janata Dal has issued notices to as many as 32 Bhojpuri singers asking them why legal action should not be taken against them for their offensive songs released during the election period. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and NDA leaders too had taken a jibe over these songs played during poll meetings in Bihar warning people of "return of jungle raj". "The RJD has issued notices to as many as 32 Bhojpuri and other dialect singers for songs taking the names of the party and its leaders, including Tejashwi Yadav, without permission to defame the party and its leaders during the election. If a fair response is not given, the party will take legal actions against them," said an RJD leader and spokesperson requesting anonymity.



Last respects: Hema Malini and daughter Esha Deol leave the crematorium after the funeral on Monday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Act of love: A fan mourns outside the Shree Vile Parle Seva Samaj crematorium in Mumbai. AP



Star veterans: Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra on the sets of a television reality show in Mumbai in 2015. PTI



Special recognition: The then President Pratibha Patil presenting the Padma Bhushan to the actor in 2012. PTI

Dashing everyman with the heart of a poet

Dharmendra's rugged charm stood out from the tragic-romantic heroes of earlier decades and the brooding, angry young men who came after him; he believed that truth did not need a technique to convey itself, inspiring a generation of mass entertainers in Hindi and South Indian cinema; despite being repeatedly overlooked by popular film awards, he was later honoured with Padma Bhushan

OBITUARY

Anuj Kumar

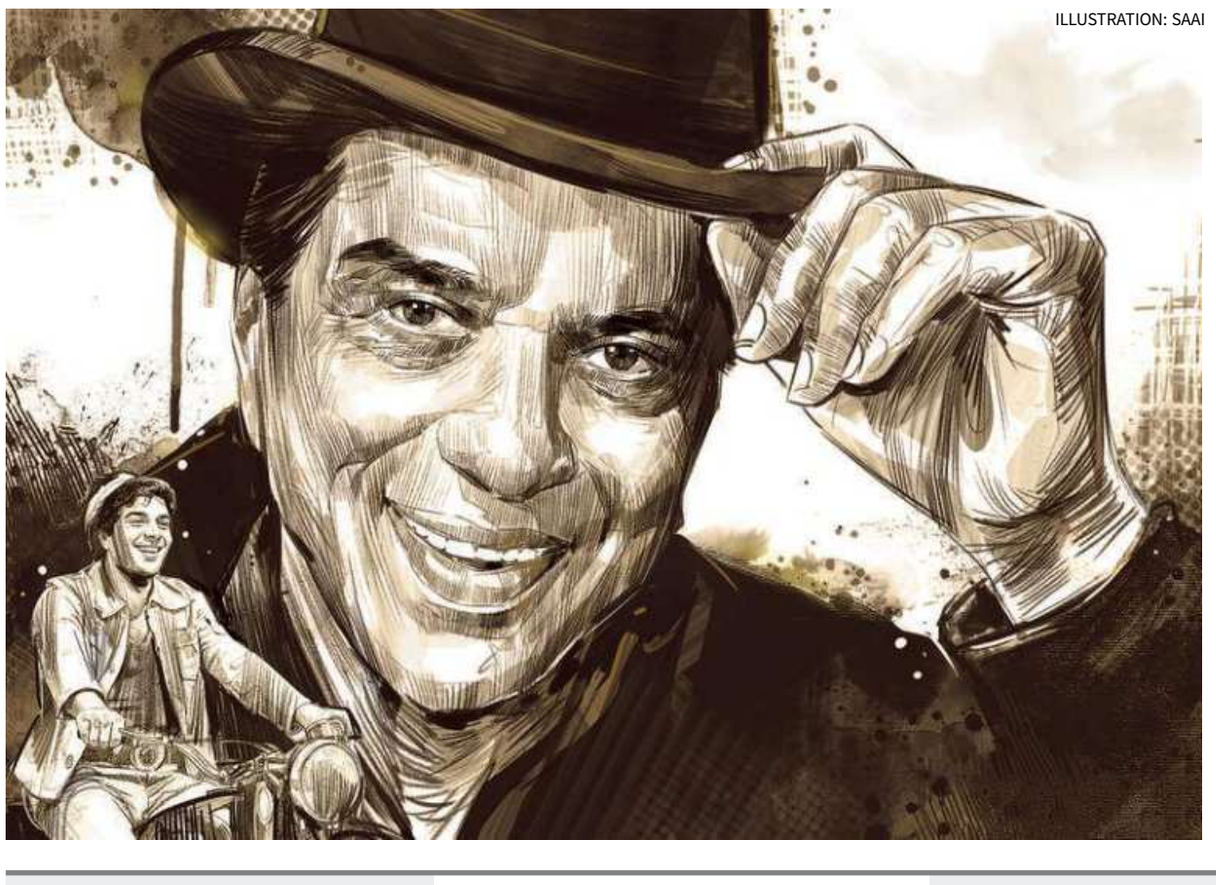


ILLUSTRATION: SAAI

The heartbeat of Hindi cinema's golden era, who turned raw instinct into cinematic immortality, Dharmendra passed away in Mumbai on Monday due to age-related ailments at 89.

Tempering fire with vulnerability, Dharmendra embodied a paradoxical masculinity being the He-Man who could shed a tear and the village avenger who recited poetry, thereby humanising the archetype of the Hindi film hero. Dharmendra's swagger, his appeal, wasn't manufactured – it was organic, unbreakable, and enduring.

His rugged charm and effortless masculinity stood out from the tragic-romantic heroes of earlier decades and the brooding, angry young men who emerged after him. Yet, his physical strength was always balanced by a deep emotional sincerity that shone through his expressive eyes.

Dharmendra played some of the most loved characters in Hindi cinema. The unflinching idealist engineer in *Satyakam*, the sensitive poet in *Anupama*, the wronged truck driver in *Pratiggya* seeking justice for his sister, the romantic protector in *Jugnu*, the reluctant saviour in *Mera Gaon Mera Desh*, the loyal friend in *Sholay*, and the prankster professor in *Chupke Chupke,* Dharmendra was perhaps the most adaptable icon of popular Hindi cinema.

Over six decades and 300 films, his ability to deliver one clean hit per decade underscores his longevity. Between 1966 and 1975, he delivered a dozen consecutive hits. Despite the high flop count in the third half of his career, Dharmendra's pull powered many average films to profitability, especially in rural markets, making him Bollywood's most commercially resilient star.

Dharmendra's stardom was built and sustained in the heartland, where his films ran for silver jubilees in single-screen theatres long after they faded from Metros.

Born Dharam Singh Deol on December 8, 1935, in his maternal village Nasrali in Ludhiana district to a Punjabi Jat family, Dharmendra grew up in the nearby town of Sahnewal, where his father, Kewal Kishan Singh Deol, was a school headmaster, and Dangon, his ancestral village in Ludhiana. Dharmendra always celebrated his roots. He would talk about the days when he worked as a tube well operator and tilled the fields.

That's why his unpolished Punjabi-inflected Hindi felt like a neighbour crooning *Main Jat Yamla Pagla Deewana (Pratiggya)*, not a star performing. Still, in another universe, he could be a refined gentleman pouring his heart on paper with *Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas Tum Rehti Ho* (*Blackmail*).

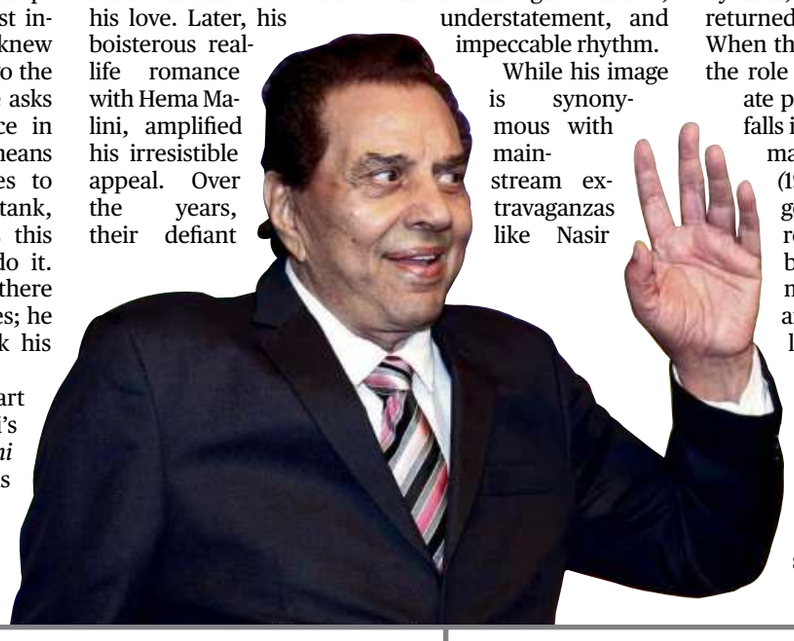
Sheer passion

Discovered through an acting contest run by the *Filmfare* magazine, Dharmendra willed his way into films through sheer passion and perseverance. His story symbolised hope for countless dreamers who longed to make it big in Bollywood.

Though he was a lifelong devotee of Dilip Kumar and saw him as a guiding light, there was no method to Dharmendra's acting.

Instinctive and unstudied, he believed that truth didn't need a technique to convey itself, inspiring a generation of mass entertainers in Hindi and South Indian cinema. When he stood against the corrupt and spoke out against injustice, the public knew Dharmendra would go the whole hog. When he asks Basanti not to dance in front of the dogs, he means it. When he decides to jump off the water tank, the audience knows this guy can very well do it. With Dharmendra, there were no half measures; he would not hold back his punches.

After a sedate start with Arjun Hingorani's *Dil Bhi Tera Hum Bhi Tere* (1960), he was noticed in Bimal Roy's *Bandini* (1963) in a small but crucial role. However, it was when he blended action with romance in O.P. Ralhan's *Phool Aur Patthar* (1966) that Dharmendra made heads turn and hearts skip a beat. His shirtless presence and electric chemistry with Meena Kumari reversed the idea of male gaze as women sighed and men aspired to be like him. He emerged as a village stud who could be a soulmate, an unpolished gem who won't flirt but declare his love. Later, his boisterous real-life romance with Hema Malini, amplified his irresistible appeal. Over the years, their defiant love story became a symbol of the bond between the north and the south, with Hema Malini winning consecutive elections from Mathura.



Despite the strong image of "Garam Dharam", his comic flair remained unmatched. Even in his testosterone-fuelled films, his comic timing stands out for the way he employs his machismo to subvert expectations, creating humour through contrast, understatement, and impeccable rhythm.

While his image is synonymous with mainstream extravaganzas like Nasir Hussain's *Yaadon Ki Baaraat* (1973), Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay* (1975), Manmohan Desai's *Dharam Veer* (1977), and Anil Sharma's *Hukumat* (1987), his early and mid-career trajectory was profoundly shaped by collaborations with Bengali masters who made Bollywood their home.

Impressed by the honesty that his eyes exuded, Bimal Roy wanted to cast him in *Parakh* (1960) but by then, Dharmendra had returned to his village. When the opportunity for the role of a compassionate prison doctor, who falls in love with the inmate, in *Bandini* (1963) arose, the legendary filmmaker remembered the boy from Punjab. A message was sent, and Dharmendra's life changed. The actor never forgot Roy's contribution to his career. When he bought his first car, he wanted to take Roy for a spin. Somehow it didn't work out, and in the meantime, Roy passed away. Dharmendra would relate this lost opportunity to make his mentor proud with great pain.

'A bankable hero'

Besides Roy, directors with their roots in intellectual and literary traditions including, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Dulal Guha, Asit Sen, and Pramod Chakravarty, played a pivotal role in transforming Dharmendra into a versatile performer. Their influence helped him navigate the competitive 1970s landscape, where stars like Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan threatened to eclipse him. It cemented his status as a bankable hero across genres and streams.

Though he informally invested in some of his films in the 1970s, in the 1980s, he launched a production house named after his daughter, Vijeta, to launch the careers of his sons, Sunny and Bobby Deol.

He was repeatedly subjected to moral scrutiny for reportedly converting to Islam for a brief period to marry Hema Malini without divorcing his first wife. His struggle with liquor and descent to B-grade cinema with a series of duds took away some of the sheen from a sterling career. There was a time in the 1990s when he prioritised quantity over quality and was reduced to a one-note, ageing action sensation, hamming up bombastic dialogues.

Political stint

There was a time when his residence in Mumbai was seen as their own by the farmers of North India. However, his stint in politics, when he was elected as a BJP MP from Bikaner, was short-lived and left him and the electorate disappointed. In recent years, he had become a subject for memes and crass mimicry, but his star power remained undiminished.

Repeatedly ignored at popular film awards, the Padma Bhushan would say in jest that someone who was never considered for the best actor award was deemed suitable for lifetime achievement awards.

In 2001, when he developed a back problem and had to spend a lot of time in the hospital's loneliness, Dharmendra turned to poetry. In later years, he would often come up with impromptu verses to reflect on the deeper meanings of human existence.

Never keen on self-promotion, he consistently radiated warmth and humility, reminding people of his pedigree as a performer, with notable performances alongside a new generation of filmmakers. Sriram Raghavan rekindled his action-romance days with *Johnny Gaddar* (2007), and Anurag Basu touched his emotional core in Life in... Metro (2007). Karan Johar's *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani* (2023), where he channelled his impish charm, was his last hurrah, and in Sriram's upcoming *Ikkis*, Dharmendra still has one more ace up his sleeve.

The emotional outpouring that we have seen in the past fortnight proves what he would say about himself. "Dharmendra wasn't the best actor, nor was he the biggest star, but he was the most loved."

> Indian cinema will never be the same, but it will stay strong as if to pay tribute to his life and journey... Here's to you Dharamji. You were, and always will be, a class act
>
> **ANIL KAPOOR**



> He is and will always be a bonafide Legend of Indian Cinema... defining and richly present in the pages of cinema history... but mostly he was the best human being... he was so loved by everyone in our industry
>
> **KARAN JOHAR**



> Farewell, my friend. I will always remember your golden heart and the moments we shared. Rest in peace, Dharamji. My deepest condolences to his family
>
> **RAJINIKANTH**



> The passing of Dharmendraji marks the end of a cinematic era. A legend whose warmth and artistry will live on forever. My deepest condolences to his family and loved ones
>
> **MOHANLAL**



Stardom did not change him, says Sharmila Tagore

NEW DELHI

Dharmendra was "just different", a man who stayed connected to his roots and never let stardom change his attitude towards people till the very end, said veteran actor Sharmila Tagore on Monday, remembering her co-star of classics such as *Satyakam* and *Chupke Chupke*. "I did not find any change in him till the end. As an actor, of course, he was wonderful to act with, and in his attitude towards the crowd or people on the set, he was the same affable, cooperative person. He would meet with people, whether rich or poor, with equal warmth. I have seen him hugging a man on the streets without any hesitation," Ms. Tagore said. "He never forgot his roots and would talk about it openly," the veteran actor added. PTI

Dilip *sahab* saw him as a brother, says Saira Banu

MUMBAI

Dharmendra and Dilip Kumar were like brothers who loved playing badminton and were foodies at heart, veteran actor and Dilip Kumar's wife Saira Banu said on Monday.

They starred together twice – first in Dharmendra's only Bengali film *Paari* (1966) and then in its 1972 remake *Anokha Milan*. In both films, Dilip Kumar made cameo appearances. Dharmendra often said Dilip Kumar's 1948 film *Shaheed* had inspired him to become an actor. And when he joined movies, he became friends with the matinee star, who died in 2021 at the age of 98. "Dilip *sahab* considered him like a younger brother. They shared a relationship that went beyond work. We've been there for each other in good and bad times," she added. PTI

Iconic films

SATYAKAM (1969): Dharmendra plays an incorrigible idealist in Gandhian mould in what is considered one of his finest roles in Indian cinema. It won the National Film Award For Best Feature Film in Hindi that year

MERA GAON MERA DESH (1971): A film about a reformed petty criminal, Ajit (Dharmendra), who falls in love with a girl, Anju (Asha Parekh), and must protect the village from the ruthless dacoit Jabbar Singh (Vinod Khanna)

SEETA AUR GEETA (1972): This comedy drama is about two separated identical twins Seeta and Geeta (Hema Malini) who meet years later and swap places.



Dharmendra plays the role of Raka, who is Seeta's love interest. This film solidified the couple as a favourite pair with fans. Both Dharmendra and Hema Malini starred in more than two dozen movies, including *Dreamgirl, Charas, Aazad, Raja Rani, Tum Haseen Main Jawan, and Razia Sultan*

YAADON KI BAARAAT (1973): The film by Nasir Hussain follows three brothers who are separated after their parents are murdered by a gangster. It became a trendsetter for the "lost brother" trope

SHOLAY (1975): In this classic, Dharmendra's playful, emotional and heart on his sleeves Veeru was the perfect foil to Amitabh Bachchan's Jai, who would lower his guards only around his friend. Veeru was the fighter and Jai his perfect wingman

CHUPKE CHUPKE (1975): Dharmendra plays botany professor Parimal Tripathi, who falls in love with Sharmila Tagore's Sulekha. It is one of Dharmendra's most endearing performances. Bachchan teamed up with Dharmendra again in the film that also featured Om Prakash and Jaya Bhaduri



POPULAR SONGS

■ ***Aaj Mausam Bada Beimaan Hai:*** Dharmendra romances Mumtaz in this 1973 romantic number sung by Mohammed Rafi, who gave voice to some of the best songs in the actor's career. As a hat tip to Dharmendra's youth, a version of this song also featured in Karan Johar's 2023 film *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani*, where Dharmendra romances Shabana Azmi

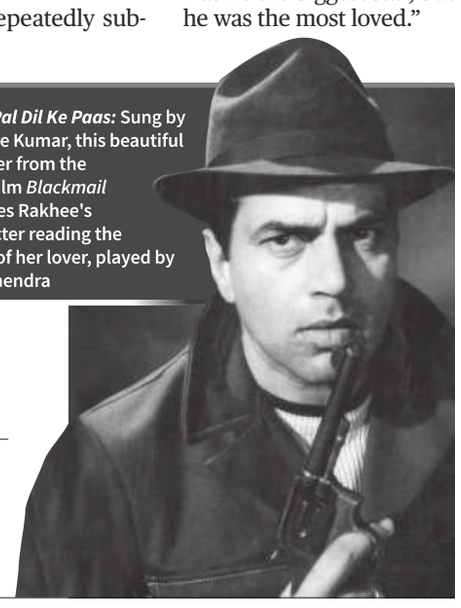
■ ***Main Jat Yamla Pagla:*** From the 1975 film *Pratiggya*, which stars Dharmendra, Hema Malini, Ajit, Jagdeep, and Mukri in lead roles. The song is sung by Rafi and music is given by Laxmikant-Pyarelal

■ ***Yeh Dosti Hum Nahin:*** The iconic friendship anthem from the 1975 Ramesh Sippy film *Sholay*, by Kishore Kumar, Manna Dey, and R. D. Burman, captures the essence of Jai and Veeru's friendship



■ ***Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas:*** Sung by Kishore Kumar, this beautiful number from the 1973 film *Blackmail* features Rakhee's character reading the letter of her lover, played by Dharmendra

■ ***Hum Bewafa Hargiz Na They:*** Kishore Kumar crooned this melancholic number for Dharmendra and Zeenat Aman's 1978 bilingual Indo-American film *Shalimar*



INBRIEF



Zubeen death: date extended for submitting probe report

The one-man commission probing the death of singer Zubeen Garg has extended the date for recording statements and submission of evidence till December 12, officials said on Monday. The commission, headed by Justice Soumitra Saikia, began recording statements and receiving evidence from November 3. The previous deadline was November 21, but it has now been extended, the commission's member-secretary Aroop Pathak said. In a notice issued on Friday, Mr. Pathak said all having knowledge of the facts and circumstances related to the singer's death can submit their statements by way of a duly notarised affidavit till December 12 from 10.30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on all days except Sundays.

Probe ordered after Afghan plane lands on wrong runway

A safety breach occurred at the Indira Gandhi International Airport on Sunday when a flight from Kabul landed on the wrong runway, just after another aircraft had taken off. Officials said the aircraft of the Ariana Afghan Airlines was cleared to land on runway 29L, which is reserved for arrivals. However, it mistakenly touched down on the adjacent runway 29R, designated only for departures. Air India flight AI-2243 to Riyadh had taken off from the same strip moments earlier, sources said. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has opened an inquiry to determine whether the lapse was caused by equipment malfunction, pilot error, or miscommunication with the control tower.

Editors Guild of India elects office-bearers for 2025-26

The Editors Guild of India (EGI) has announced its new office-bearers for the 2025-26 term, with *Hardnews* Editor Sanjay Kapoor elected as its president, *The Hindu businessline*'s former Editor Raghavan Srinivasan as general secretary, and *Thumbprint NE* Editor-in-Chief Teresa Rehman as treasurer. The announcement was made by the EGI election committee with Rajdeep Sardesai, Consulting Editor with *India Today*, as its convenor, and Vijay Naik, Consulting Editor of Sakal Media Group, as the member.

SC to examine plea on policy for wrongful imprisonment

The Supreme Court on Monday decided to examine a plea for the formulation of a uniform, national framework that recognises the right to compensation for unjust and arbitrary imprisonment, which culminated in discharge or acquittal. A Bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath issued notice to the Union government on the petition filed by Jawaharlal Sharma, represented by advocate Neha Rathi, to recommend appropriate yardsticks for monetary relief, as well as counselling, livelihood assistance, and social reintegration. The petition sought a dedicated compensation fund to ensure timely and effective relief to such victims. "Arbitrary and prolonged imprisonment of citizens amounts to state-inflicted injustice...," the petition argued.

Navy gets 'silent hunter', 80% home-grown *Mahe*

Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi launches warship, says 'true strength' of the armed forces lies in 'synergy', adds that Army, Navy and Air Force form 'the trinity of India's strategic strength'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

INS Mahe, India's first Mahe-class anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft, was commissioned at the Naval Dockyard by General Upendra Dwivedi, Chief of the Army Staff, on Monday.

With over 80% indigenous components, the ship is another step in the Indian Navy's efforts towards achieving self-reliance, the Navy said. The induction was done after long, rigorous trials for over two years, officials said. Due to its stealth and unyielding readiness, *INS Mahe's* motto is 'Silent Hunters'.

This was the first time an Army chief presided over the commissioning of a naval warship. General Dwivedi said that the true strength of the Indian armed forces lay in synergy among the three services.

"In the age of multi-domain operations, the country's ability to act in concert from the depths of the ocean to the highest frontier will determine the security influence of the Indian Republic," he said, adding that Operation Sindoor showcased the seamless harmony between the services.



INS Mahe, the Mahe-class anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft at the Naval Dockyard in Mumbai. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Major transformation

The Army chief noted that the force is undergoing a major transformation, with joint-ness and integration serving as key pillars.

"As said by Helen Keller, alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much. So, as a soldier, we are standing among seafarers... The sea, land, and the skies from a single continuum of national security. And together, the Army, Navy and Air Force form the trinity of India's strategic strength," General Dwivedi said.

INS Mahe, the lead ship of eight vessels in its class, has been designed and built by Cochin Shipyard Limited.

It will form the first line of coastal defence, integrating seamlessly with larger surface combatants, submarines, and aviation assets to maintain constant vigilance over India's maritime areas of operation.

"Today's ceremony not only marks the induction of a potent new platform to a maritime order of battle, but also reaffirms our nation's increasing capability to design, construct, and field complex combatants with indigenous technology.

This commissioning will significantly augment the Indian Navy's capability to ensure near-sea dominance, strengthen the coastal security grid and safeguard our maritime interests across the vast expanse of our littorals," General Dwivedi said.

Listing out the abilities of the warship, a government statement said, "The ship's combat suite blends multiple systems into a compact yet potent network. She is specially designed to undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal and shallow waters. Fitted with advanced weapons, sensors, and communication systems enabling it to detect, track, and neutralise sub-surface threats with precision, the ship can sustain prolonged operations in shallow waters and features technologically advanced machinery and control systems."

Gavi, UNICEF ink deal to provide easy access to malaria vaccine

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
NEW DELHI

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have announced a new agreement that it said will make the R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccines significantly more accessible and affordable, paving the way for protecting more children.

The deal, executed by UNICEF, is expected to generate up to $90 million in savings for Gavi and countries, equivalent to more than 30 million additional doses – enabling full vaccination of nearly seven million more children against malaria over the next five years. It is financed by Gavi through an advance payment, enabled by the innovative International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm) mechanism.

The lower price of the vaccine – at $2.99 per dose – is anticipated to take effect in approximately one year.

Gavi facilitates and finances the procurement, logistics, market shaping and integration of malaria vaccines into national immunisation programmes. To date, over 40 million doses of malaria vaccines have been delivered through the Gavi malaria vaccination programme and are now part of routine immunisation in 24 African countries that together represent more than 70% of the world's malaria burden.



R21/Matrix-M was co-developed by the University of Oxford and Serum Institute of India. AP

UNICEF is the world's largest buyer of vaccines, delivering nearly three billion doses every year.

Prequalified vaccines

The WHO has prequalified two malaria vaccines to-date: R21/Matrix-M (co-developed by the University of Oxford and Serum Institute of India, leveraging Novavax's Matrix-M adjuvant technology) and RTS,S/AS01 (developed by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), PATH and partners).

Himachal govt. decides to reorganise panchayats

Press Trust of India
SHIMLA

The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet on Monday decided to reorganise panchayats and engage 1,000 'rogi mitras' in the Health Department to ensure better patient care in health institutions across the State.

Reorganisation of panchayats is a process of restructuring the boundaries, composition and functions of rural local self-government institutions to improve governance, ensure effective service delivery and adapt to changing demographics and administrative needs.

The decision to reorganise panchayats came at a time when a stand-off is going on between the State Election Commission and the government over holding panchayat elections according to schedule.

Press Club concerned over some clauses of Data Protection Act

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Press Club of India (PCI) said on Monday that the "ambiguity and open-ended scope" of certain clauses of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, "escalates the potential for weaponisation of the law manifold".

Expressing "anguish" over the manner in which the DPDP Rules were notified recently, the PCI said it, along with 22 other press bodies, had submitted a Joint Memorandum in June 2025 to the Electronics and Information Technology Ministry in an attempt to engage with the Centre on the law.

"The intention of submitting the Joint Memorandum was two-fold. The first was to engage with the government in the most constructive and democratic manner to help it come out with a model code of implementation (Rules) that did not strangle the functioning of journalists and media organisations in the world's largest democracy," it said.

"The second was to demonstrate that some of the Sections of the DPDP Act, 2023, were riddled with serious ambiguities due to their sweeping definitions and scope. The loosely drafted sections open up numerous possibilities of weaponisation of the law with the purpose of curtailing press freedom," it said.

"We at no stage asked for repealing the law. We are quite aware of the necessity of a law for protecting personal data of citizens in the digital age," it said, adding that the press bodies had submitted a set of 35 questions in August for seeking clarification about the application of certain sections.

India braces for disruption of air travel after Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano erupts

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

India is bracing for potential disruption to air travel with volcanic ash from Sunday's eruption of Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano forecast to drift towards mainland India.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has issued advisories urging airlines to strictly steer clear of affected altitudes and regions to ensure flight safety as volcanic ash can harm aircraft engines due to its abrasive, glass-like particles that melt at high temperatures. When ash is ingested, it can melt on hot engine components, harden into a glass-like substance, and stick to turbine blades. Airlines have also been advised to report any suspected impact of ash on engine performance or cabin smoke or odour.



Ash clouds from the Hayli Gubbi volcanic eruption (in photo) has entered the Indian subcontinent from western Rajasthan. AP

Airports too have been told to inspect runways for contamination and suspend or restrict flight operations, if need be.

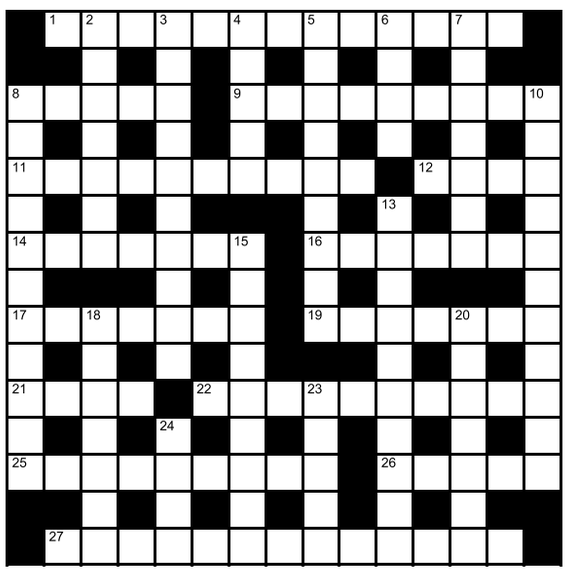
Large plumes of smoke were initially visible over Ethiopia though the volcanic eruption stopped. After travelling over Yemen and Oman, ash clouds entered the Indian subcontinent from western Rajasthan on Monday and were moving north-east wards. Over the course of the night, they are expected to sweep across central parts of the country and cross Delhi close to midnight, and travel over parts of Uttar Pradesh, parts of Bihar and in the North East over Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

TH CROSSWORD + 14648

(set by Dr. X)

Solve this puzzle online and access more puzzles at *https://crossword.thehindu.com*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Rebellious men stabbed during poll - a shocking way to die? (13)
8 Watery discharge from her gum wound, not good (5)
9 Cash, ring and gem at centre stolen by outlaws (9)
11 Dynamic English icon taking lecture relating to revival of traditional style (10)
12 Test about scientifically classified groups (4)
14 Mixed gin with Italian vermouth - extremely elated and lit (7)
16 Liqueur in party, most dry (7)
17 American author delights at launch in store (7)
19 Contemptible person bit guard, dashed out of university (7)
21 Strange Scottish swindle, billions stolen (4)
22 Frugal person beginning to examine deception by old cheapskate (10)
25 Trooper is running back (9)
26/8D What pole vaulter will do to get lost (4,1,7,4)
27 Model at Ankara, she is extremely skinny (2,4,2,1,4)

Down

2 Recline, swilling old wine (3,4)
3 Fighting about ultimately controversial ending (10)
4 Finally expose bro's bad habits (5)
5 Completely sure of fraud and wrongdoing involving new director (9)
6 Fan reviewed Adele's latest song (4)
7 Characters in most ravaged Czech city (7)
8 See 26 Across
10 Major having a drink with girl on base, a military assembly point (7,4)
13 Atrium refurbished after receiving proper approval (10)
15 Government's disastrous measure isolates America (9)
18 Gives a different part to versatile actress (7)
20 Boy hikes around Cambodia's capital (7)
23 Nasal passages in baboon are slender (5)
24 Engage in game show (4)

SUDOKU

		5	9				1	
7				1		8	5	
	8	1			3			
		4		3	5			1
			7	4	6			
6			1	9		7		
			3			1	9	
	2	6		5				3
	3				9	2		

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

Solution to previous puzzle

F	A	T	H	O	M	M	O	S
L	A	V			P	L	O	
T	A	I	N	T	E	D	D	I
I	G	R	C	U	E	P		
B	R	A	I	N	S	T	O	R
	E	L	N			T	A	
M	E	R	G	E	G	A	R	D
A			E	E	E			N
L	I	F	E	S	P	A	N	S
N		N			I	P		N
U	T	A	H	P	L	A	Y	E
A		A	I	L	C	E	T	
P	I	O	N	E	E	R	S	T
N	C	C			E	I	L	
S	C	E	N	E	S	O	D	E

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	4	6	2	9	7	8	1	5
2	7	1	4	5	8	6	3	9
5	9	8	6	1	3	2	4	7
1	5	4	7	8	9	3	6	2
8	3	9	5	2	6	4	7	1
6	2	7	3	4	1	5	9	8
4	6	2	9	7	5	1	8	3
9	8	5	1	3	4	7	2	6
7	1	3	8	6	2	9	5	4

FAITH

Krishna's affirmation

Krishna's promise in the Bhagavad Gita is a beautiful reminder of the Lord's care for His devotees, said Swami Mitranandaji. The verse, '*Ananyash chintayanto mam ye janah paryupasate tesham nityabhiyuktanam yoga kshemam vahamyaham,*' translates to, "The persons who worship Me, and ever devoted to Me – to them I carry what they lack and for them I preserve what they already have." Krishna highlights that those who are single-pointedly devoted to Him, putting consistent effort to reach Him, will have their needs taken care of. 'Yoga' and 'kshema' refer to acquiring and preserving, respectively. The Lord promises to provide what is needed and protect what is already acquired.

Reflecting on our lives, we see that anxiety and tension often revolve around acquiring what we lack and preserving what we have gained. This constant striving and grasping can distract us from focusing on the Lord. Krishna's message is clear: surrender these intense desires and He will take care of everything.

A beautiful example is Swami Tapovan Maharaj's experience in the Himalayas. Stranded in a dilapidated village, he was visited by three highwaymen. Finding only a copy of the Bhagavad Gita and very simple clothes, they looked around once again, let things be and then turned around and offered him some food that they had with them. Tapovan Maharaj realised that the Lord had come in the guise of the three men who made a living by thievery, merely to feed him. This is but one illustration of the promise by Lord Krishna to His devotees. No matter where they are, or what they are going through.

Where does road dust settle in India's efforts to clean its air?

Dust pollution is mainly caused by unscientific practices during the development of roads and maintenance; the collected dust is typically discarded in landfills or on the roadsides, from where the wind easily carries it back into the cities, rendering the entire process of sweeping ineffective

Charu Tyagi
Swagata Dey



Efforts to control road dust have been underway in India for several years. Representative photo. SUBHASISH DUTTA/UNSPLASH

Road dust mainly comprises PM_{10} and coarse particles and forms a large share of the air we breathe. With the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) aiming for a 40% reduction in PM_{10} by 2025-2026, reducing road dust is an urgent priority.

This is reinforced by source apportionment studies across 17 non-attainment cities that have found road dust to be a major contributor to PM_{10} (20-52%) as well as $PM_{2.5}$ (8-25%) particles. IIT-Delhi researchers have also recorded that streets in 32 cities across Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana vary widely vis-à-vis their silt loads, from 0.2 g/m² to 111.2 g/m²; Delhi averages 14.47 g/m².

Overall, cities in North India have heavier silt loads and are thus dustier than their southern counterparts.

In response, governments have already invested heavily in fighting dust. Per a 2024 report by the Centre for Science and Environment, ₹19,711 crore was allocated to 131 cities between 2019 and 2025 under the NCAP to improve air quality. By November 2023, nearly 64% of the total fund had been spent on road dust control, far more than what was spent on tackling biomass burning, vehicular pollution, and capacity-building efforts.

While this suggests that there's a prioritisation, it's essential to assess effectiveness on the ground.

Policy landscape

Efforts to control road dust have been underway for several years. In January 2018, the Union Environment Ministry issued a notification to mitigate dust at construction sites, mandating paving and blacktopping of roads leading up to such sites. In 2021, the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) recommended the establishment of 'Dust Control and Management Cells'. Following statutory directions from the CAQM, 68 Cells were set up to undertake a comprehensive set of actions, including identifying dust hotspots, paving and repairing roads and roadsides, greening central verges and roadsides, and deploying mechanised road-sweeping machines and anti-smog guns. The CAQM periodically reviews these activities. However, dust from roads and open areas remains a major driver of poor air quality in Delhi-NCR.

To strengthen its approach, the CAQM initiated a study called 'Addressing vehicular traffic-induced road dust resuspension for air quality action plans' in 2025. In the pilot phase, 24% of 82 km of assessed road length was found to be in poor condition, 42% moderate, and 34% good. The CAQM also set up a committee to develop a 'Standard Framework for Controlling Dust Pollution from Roads and Open Areas'.

Both initiatives recommended multiple activities, including paving and greening, for the NCR states as well as additional steps such as digital mapping of all roads in Delhi-NCR and conducting comprehensive road condition surveys.

As is evident, these efforts were focused on Delhi-NCR whereas similar measures and institutional mechanisms are needed across India. Indeed, the Environment (Protection) Act 1986 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1981 make broad references to road dust management. The Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules 2025 don't outline specific regulations addressing road dust control at the national scale, however. There are also no standard operating procedures to scientifically dispose of the dust collected by manual and mechanised sweeping to prevent resuspension.

Jurisdictional puzzle

While the NCAP, the CAQM guidelines, and city action plans prioritise control options such as paving roads and roadsides, sprinkling water, and so on, the outcomes remain uneven.

Even with 64% of the total NCAP fund spent on road repair and maintenance, 29 cities have reported an increase in PM10 concentrations. Of the 68 cities where the local PM10 concentration dropped, 61 were above the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, pointing to the limited effectiveness of extant interventions.

One major challenge is fragmented jurisdiction.

Under the NCAP, municipal corporations and State Pollution Control Boards are required to curb road dust. In practice, however, the responsibility is split across multiple agencies. In Delhi, 12 agencies – including the Municipal Corporation, the Delhi Development Authority, the Central Public Works Department, and the National Highways Authority of India – maintain roads. Similarly, 18 agencies are involved in Uttar Pradesh, 22 in Haryana, and 16 in Rajasthan. Without clearly demarcated roles, funds and accountability become

Even with 64% of the NCAP fund spent on maintenance, 29 cities reported an increase in PM10 concentrations. Of the 68 cities where local PM10 concentration dropped, 61 were above the National Ambient Air Quality Standards

diffused. Operational constraints add to the problem. Of Delhi's total road length of 19,000 km, only 8,000 km has been identified for mechanised sweep ing. Around 200 mechanised road-sweeping machines (each operating at 40 km/hr) are required to clean this stretch every day. Yet the number of such machines in Delhi is only 85. This gap is much wider in other cities, underscoring the need to properly estimate road length and for machine mapping.Road dust management guidelines should also be established to define the appropriate type of cleaning and maintenance machinery based on road width, surface type, traffic conditions, debris characteristics, water availability, and seasonal variations.

Finally, to ensure agencies coordinate better, a GIS-based platform should be created to allow them to monitor and resolve complaints in real-time, thus improving accountability. Such a system can be integrated with existing applications, such as the Green Delhi App and Swachhata App, to improve coordination and response.

Practical measures

Dust pollution is mainly caused by unscientific practices during road development and maintenance. The collected dust is typically discarded in landfills or on roadsides, wherefrom the wind easily carries it back into cities, rendering the entire sweeping process ineffective.

Dust suppressant chemicals such as calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, and natural polymer-based agents (e.g. lignosulphate and bitumen-based emulsions) are widely available. However, their effectiveness and impact on soil and road health aren't well documented. We need scientifically informed mitigation strategies, including guidelines for using dust suppressants and scientific disposal mechanisms for collection.

Addressing road and open-area dust across India will require a holistic and time-bound approach, embedded within a long-term, sustainable urban planning framework.

A comprehensive, science-based regulatory mechanism for cleaner road construction and maintenance, considering open roadsides and air quality as critical components of infrastructure development plans, is essential.

Thoughtfully designed and consistently implemented dust control strategies can significantly enhance air quality, protect public health, and help build more resilient and liveable cities.

(Charu Tyagi is a senior associate and Swagata Dey heads the Air Quality Policy and Outreach team, both at the Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), a research-based think tank. charudec10@gmail.com, swagata.dey@cstep.in)



Moss growing on bricks. JAMES919 (CC BY-SA)

Moss spores survive space exposure, testing life's bounds

Vasudevan Mukunth

How far can plant life be pushed in harsh environments? Climate change as much as humans' plans for colonies on the moon or Mars makes this question urgent. Scientists already know that some microbes and crop seeds can tolerate heavy doses of radiation, deep cold, and vacuum.

Mosses and other bryophytes were among the first plants to colonise land and have survived repeated shifts in the earth's climate, yet their limits in true space conditions were not well known. Previous space experiments mostly used vascular plants, which have specialised tissues to transport water and minerals through their bodies. Research on mosses stopped at simulations in labs.

In a study published on November 20 in *iScience*, researchers from Japan chose the model moss *Physcomitrium patens* because its life cycle and stress responses have been well studied in the lab. They examined which moss tissues could withstand extreme stress, and whether any of them could stay alive in open space outside the International Space Station (ISS).

The team first compared three moss tissues – young filaments (protonemata), stress-induced brood cells, and spores inside their capsule – in simulated conditions, including intense ultraviolet (UV) light, freezing, high heat, vacuum, and vacuum plus short-wave UV. Then they sent the most resilient stage, spores encased in their sporangium, to a platform outside the ISS for nine months and measured how many spores still

The study strengthened the idea that bryophytes could help green extraterrestrial bases and support life-support systems while giving astrobiologists a clearer view of how robust plant life could be beyond the earth

germinated when they returned.

In the ground tests, protonemata died quickly under strong UV, long freezing at minus 80 °C, and when heated to 55 °C. Brood cells performed better but still failed under the strongest treatments. Spores protected by the sporangium were far tougher: many survived UV doses about 1,000x higher than brood cells, 30 days of deep freezing, and 30 days at 55° C, with only partial loss of germination. They also tolerated nearly a month in high vacuum and strong vacuum-UV with almost no drop in viability. In space, spores from all dark and UV-shielded groups germinated at about 95%, showing that vacuum, temperature swings, and microgravity had little effect. Even in the fully exposed group, which received space UV, about 86% of spores still germinated.

The results suggested while the *P. patens* spores themselves were intrinsically stress-resistant, the sporangium added a protective shell against radiation, temperature extremes, and vacuum – echoing the way seed coats protect embryos in higher plants, and may reflect early evolutionary solutions that helped the first land plants cope with dry, exposed conditions.

By comparing UV tolerance across many organisms, the authors also showed that moss spores rival or exceed famous radiation-resistant microbes and some crop seeds, especially in their ability to handle very-short-wavelength UV. At the same time, the study noted the spores were less impressive at ultra-low temperatures than some tree seeds, that pigment damage could matter over longer missions and estimated that spores might survive 15 years in space based on limited data and needs testing.

Even so, the authors added, their work strengthened the idea that bryophytes could help "green" future extraterrestrial bases and support closed life-support systems while giving astrobiologists a clearer view of how robust plant life could be beyond the earth.

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

110 years of general relativity

Vasudevan Mukunth

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

Question 1
Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity is written in a compact set of linked equations that relate how spacetime responds to how matter and energy are distributed. What are these central mathematical relations, which are often named after Einstein, called?

QUESTION 2
Instead of treating gravity as an invisible pull across empty space, general relativity says that mass and energy tell spacetime how to bend and that bent spacetime tells objects how to move. Name the geometric property of spacetime that describes this bending in the theory.

QUESTION 3
Einstein didn't invent the mathematical tools he needed for general relativity from scratch. Instead he drew on the work of a 19th century Italian mathematician who, with Tullio Levi-Civita, formalised the mathematics of spaces. Name this mathematician, whose contributions to differential geometry eventually made Einstein's theory possible.

QUESTION 4
Before the general theory of relativity, physicists described the attraction between two masses using a simpler theory that treated gravity as a force that acted instantaneously across some distance. Name the originator of this theory, which includes a law saying force depends on the product of the masses and the inverse square of the distance.

QUESTION 5
In order to solve problems in general relativity, physicists need to first describe quantities like energy, momentum, and the properties of spacetime in a way that works in any coordinate system and any direction. Which mathematical tool, which generalises the concept of scalars and vectors to higher dimensions, is used for this purpose?

Answers to November 20 quiz:
1. Bubble separation method in mineral processing – **Ans: Froth flotation**
2. Selective swapping of ions between solid, liquid phases – **Ans: Ion exchange**
3. Carbon-based extraction technique in metallurgy – **Ans: Carbothermic reaction**
4. Liquid medium used in electrorefining methods – **Ans: Molten salts**
5. Mixtures with lower melting points than their constituents – **Ans: Eutectics**

Visual: **Diamond**

First contact: K.N. Viswanathan | Mohammad Sohail | Tamal Biswas | Anmol Agrawal

Visual: Each exact solution of the mathematical relations of general relativity (Q1) has a name. Name this person, who solved the relations for what space looks like around a spherical and non-rotating black hole, while serving as a soldier in World War I. PUBLIC DOMAIN

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Labour and honour

Smooth execution of the Labour Codes is linked to tripartite consultations

The Centre's announcement to implement the four Labour Codes – they concern wages, industrial relations, social security and occupational safety, health and working conditions – has been heralded by the business and investment community as the biggest reform in a long time. Passed by Parliament between 2019 and 2020, the implementation of these Codes was delayed for multiple reasons. The Codes replace 29 laws that regulated employer-employee relations, and significantly reduce the compliance requirements for a company every year. The Centre has maintained that it will handhold the States to draft and adopt the Rules in accordance with the Codes – most States and Union Territories have published the draft Rules for the Codes. Free market advocates have always considered India's labour laws to be a hindrance to its growth potential. Under the Codes, worker-employer relations, social security mechanism and wage and aspects of emoluments will witness huge changes. India needs to generate employment for its growing youth population as it is estimated that 12 million people attain working age every year. This is a trend that will hold for several years. The Economic Survey of 2023-24 noted that there needs to be an average of nearly 78.5 lakh jobs created annually until 2030 in the non-farm sector to engage the rising workforce.

Despite the long delay in the implementation of the Codes, the concerns raised by labour unions have not been addressed in full. Labour representatives allege that the government ignored the pro-worker recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour, (submitted in 2002) and, instead, accommodated all "pro employer" recommendations and made them a part of the Codes. Those issues are now redundant, but the nature of work is undergoing rapid transformation. Considering the uncertainties due to wars, trade disruptions and climatic challenges, enhancing both agriculture and industrial productivity is necessary and ensuring a healthy worker-employer relationship is key to this. With gig and platform works and artificial intelligence disrupting conservative definitions of work, wage and social security, the Government should take the steps needed to reform the labour sector wisely. The Indian Labour Conference (ILC), which has met 46 times between 1940 and 2015, has not been convened since then. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised that labour laws would be changed only after wider tripartite consultations. So, it becomes imperative that the Government conducts the 47th session of the ILC on the Labour Codes to ensure their smooth implementation. In the process, States should also be consulted along with employers and employees.

Missing 'Ubuntu'

The U.S. boycott of the G-20 summit in Johannesburg was impolitic

The G-20 leaders' summit in Johannesburg, the first ever held in an African country, was unique in many positive, and some not-so-positive ways. The summit has an added voice as the African Union was made a member during India's G20 Presidency in 2023. As a result, the deliberations and the declaration seemed imbued by the spirit of the "Global South", as they listed the multiple challenges the world faces including conflicts, deepening inequality and increasing economic uncertainty. In particular, the nations gathered called for a "just, comprehensive, and lasting peace" in "Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Occupied Palestinian Territory [and] Ukraine", invoking the UN charter. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke at all three sessions of the G-20, suggesting six initiatives that India could lead in order to address some of those issues, particularly on the need to "reconsider" the parameters of global development. These initiatives included a Traditional Knowledge Repository, a G20-Africa Skills Multiplier Initiative (where India proposed to train a million people across Africa), a Global Healthcare Response Team, an Initiative on Countering the Drug-Terror Nexus, an Open Satellite Data Partnership" to share agriculture, fishing and disaster-related information, and a "G20 Critical Minerals Circularity initiative". The government asserted that it had a role in drafting the declaration, but would have been disappointed by the brief condemnation of terrorism when compared to the 2023 New Delhi declaration, given the Delhi blast and the Pahalgam attack.

The leaders present spoke volubly about the need for bolstering the G-20's role in managing global challenges, but were silent on the absence of the most important dignitary – U.S. President Donald Trump did not just skip the Summit, but the U.S. government also boycotted it, sending only a diplomat as an observer. This is the first time that the U.S., that has cited tensions with South Africa over "alleged discrimination" against "White minority farmers", has walked away from the summit of the biggest economies. Aside from the irony of a "boycott" against South Africa, which suffered apartheid under the Afrikaner-led regime, the U.S.'s decision also raises questions over its commitment to the G-20 even as it takes over its presidency for 2026. The absence of the leader of the largest economy and the lack of universal criticism of the decision run counter to the hope and hype of the G-20 finally representing a more democratic world order over the last few years. The spirit of 'Ubuntu' or "I am because we are", referred to in this year's declaration, must be heeded by the very powers that would seek to side-line the grouping today.

The amplitude of gubernatorial discretion

"But the Queen has no such veto. She must sign her own death-warrant if the two Houses unanimously send it up to her. It is a fiction of the past to ascribe to her legislative power (*The English Constitution*, Walter Bagehot, 1865).

The Supreme Court of India has given its opinion on 11 out of the 14 questions on which the President of India had sought its advice under Article 143 of the Constitution. The issue behind these questions is the role to be played by the Governor of a State while deciding on the Bills passed by the legislative Assemblies as in the provisions of Article 200 of the Constitution.

The mode of appointment and exercise of discretionary powers by the Governor have engaged the attention of the political executive, at the Union and State levels, and constitutional experts. After seven-and-a-half decades, it is time to analyse how the discharge of gubernatorial responsibilities has given rise to conflicts and litigation.



R. Mohan

is a former officer of the Indian Revenue Service

The focus points

The two major constitutional questions which came up before the Court in the Tamil Nadu case and the subsequent Presidential reference were, first, the existence of discretionary power for the Governor while assenting to, withholding assent from and in reserving a Bill for the consideration of the President, and, second, the time limit within which a Governor or the President has to act on a Bill passed by the legislature.

In the Court's opinion, the Governor has discretion in the three courses of action available when a Bill is presented and no time-line can be prescribed. However, the Court has a limited power of judicial review in glaring cases of inaction when the delay is prolonged, unexplained and indefinite.

Here, it is pertinent to note that when a Bill which has been withheld and sent to legislature, the Governor has to give assent as soon as possible, after it is resubmitted.

In the Government of India Act, 1935, both the Governor-General and the Governor had discretion (Sections 32 and 75, respectively) in assenting, withholding and returning Bills. In the draft Article 175, discretion was conferred on the Governor for returning a Bill with a message to a unicameral legislature. The words 'discretion' and the 'single house' in the draft Article were removed after debates in the Constituent Assembly.

The Court was of the opinion that prior to the insertion of the Tenth Schedule in 1985 in the Constitution, it was a realistic possibility that Bills could be passed without the support of the Council of Ministers. The Court implies, that after the anti-defection law, members of the party cannot act against the party whip.

> The advisory by the top court has widened the scope of gubernatorial discretion and made it non-justiciable

Hence, the Court has taken the view that a scenario where the Council of Ministers would tender aid and advice to the effect that the Governor must return a Bill for reconsideration or reserve it for the consideration of the President is not conceivable.

This view, however, does not take into consideration a situation when a coalition government of two parties, A and B, get a Bill passed in the Assembly.

When the Bill goes for assent, there is a political change and party B forms a coalition government with party C. As a part of the new political adjustment, party B agrees not to press the Bill. The new Ministry will naturally advise the Governor to send back the Bill to the legislature. Similar scenarios have been mentioned by the constitutional advisor, B.N. Rau in his note to the Constituent Assembly. These make it abundantly clear that there is no need to assume that there is implied discretion in Article 200.

On aid and advice

Another situation mentioned in the opinion of the Court for assuming that there is implied discretion for the Governor in Article 200 for protecting and defending the Constitution is that "if there is no discretion, then even if advice is tendered contrary to the written text of the Constitution, the Governor will be bound by such advice".

Three questions arise here. First, given that the members of the Council of Ministers take oath to owe allegiance to the Constitution, why will they tender such an advice? Second, if such an unconstitutional advice is tendered to the Governor, is she/he impeded from sending a report to the Union under Article 356, for which there is no need for the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers? Third, does the President have any discretionary power, if such advice is tendered by the Union cabinet?

The Sarkaria Commission report stated that the discretion is available only under the second proviso to Article 200 and that it is quite narrow. The present advisory, on the other hand, has widened the scope of gubernatorial discretion and made it non-justiciable. If the power of assent, withholding and sending messages (the advisory states that there cannot be withholding simpliciter) fall in the realm of discretion and are not subject to judicial review, the consequence will be a form of gubernatorial governance in the States.

The Court has adumbrated that the Governor is not an employee of the Union (*Hargovind Pant vs Raghukul Tilak Dr. And Others* (1979 AIR 1109). However, none of the modes of appointment of the Governors, recommended by the Sarkaria, Venkatachaliah and Punchhi Commissions have been seriously considered.

Sorabjee's observation

Soli Sorabjee, in 1985, made a sharply critical observation that an unhealthy practice has grown from offering the post of Governor as a consolation prize for 'burnt-out' politicians or as a stepping stone for those still burning with political ambition. Given this backdrop, there is a likelihood of friction when the Union and the States are ruled by different political parties. It is to be noted that those who are now critical of the role of the Governors, had earlier ignored the well-meaning recommendations on the mode of appointment of Governors by three commissions on Centre-State relations.

Having judicially determined time lines for deciding on Bills passed by the legislature arose when States approached the Court citing long delays at the level of Governors. Citing instances of delay in the cases reserved for consideration of the President, former Chief Minister of Karnataka Ramakrishna Hegde has said: "The President had yet to give assent to as many as 74 Bills referred to him by different State Governors. Of these, two had been pending for seven years, three for six years, two for five years, seven for three years and 58 for the past one year... after making the Karnataka government wait for six years, the Home Ministry wrote to the State Government that its Educational Bill, 1983, was 'under examination'" (*Mainstream*, June 8, 1991).

The three commissions had also recommended timelines. In a polity, where smooth working relations are to be ensured between the Union and the States, why not think of a consensus and amend Article 200 introducing time lines? The ruling party of yesteryears is in the opposition today and it can be vice-versa.

The advisory opinion of the learned judges has upturned the position in the judgment of the Tamil Nadu case. Even though the judgment does not merge in the opinion, the latter has substantial persuasive value. Will the future be happier if the non-justiciable discretion without specific time lines is available for exercise of gubernatorial functions under Article 200?

Society must reclaim respectful, open dialogue

Despite the growing divisions around us, hope still shines in the power of thoughtful and respectful dialogue. Neutrality and balanced judgment form the bedrock not only of our legal system but also of a peaceful society. Yet, today, public discourse faces a profound crisis. What was once a tradition of reasoned debate, has devolved into a noisy contest where voices shout not to be understood but to drown the others out. Now, television studios, social media and public forums often resemble battlefields, driven by profiteers of division, digital platforms are designed to exploit our emotions, and factions thrive on tribal allegiance rather than truth. In such a world, neutrality is not only undervalued but scorned.



Justice N. Anand Venkatesh

is Judge, Madras High Court

Only rigid choices

The ideal of the "middle path" seems to be vanishing. Society is forced into rigid binary choices: you are either left or right, with no room for ambiguity or balance. Those who practise impartial judgment, the essence of a healthy democracy, are marginalised and attacked as weak or irrelevant. Even within communities meant to unite, opposition is crushed not through debate but through ridicule and exclusion. Defending neutrality has become a rare act of courage, increasingly unsupported.

This crisis deeply affects those in positions of responsibility, *viz.*, the decision-makers, and mediators who must navigate competing demands. Their challenge transcends balancing viewpoints; it becomes survival in a climate where compromise is treated as betrayal and self-doubt as failure. Emotional exhaustion plagues those who choose dialogue over division.

> The middle path of understanding over discord and reason over rage is necessary in today's turbulent world

Neutrality itself can be misused. Some wield it selectively, condemning faults in others while ignoring their own. Such hypocrisy corrodes discourse and erodes trust, transforming civic conversation into performances of self-justification where convenience trumps consistency. Philosopher Jay Garfield warns that polarisation destroys civil discourse which is the foundation of democracy. To rebuild, he urges us to seek dialogue across divides with openness and humility, viewing opponents as fellow humans, not enemies. Only through respectful conversation can we address the complex challenges of our time.

Reclaim genuine dialogue

The crisis we face is more than political. It is existential. When neutrality is mocked and moderation punished, when only the loudest voices are heard, our collective capacity to grow and innovate fades. The remedy lies in a humble return to respectful engagement – accepting that no truth is certain without risk and that every position, including neutrality, carries moral weight. Genuine dialogue must be reclaimed, refusing the destructive ease of polarisation. Without this, the very foundation of meaningful democratic life is at stake.

The legislative process becomes dysfunctional as polarisation leads to deadlock or superficial rubber stamp decisions. Judicial autonomy is questioned, with courts seen as biased factions rather than impartial arbiters. Leaders are viewed as faction heads, fractured from the broader population's needs. Public discourse devolves into hostile rhetoric rather than reasoned debate, further harming social cohesion and democratic norms.

Beyond politics, polarisation impacts individual well-being and social integration. Chronic stress and anxiety related to political hostility rise. Social networks shrink as communities segregate along ideological lines, eroding the cooperative spirit needed for societal progress. Workplace dynamics reflect polarisation, leading to discrimination and conflict.

The online environment worsens this, with misinformation campaigns, emotional manipulation and divisive content as norms. Hate crimes and political violence have increased in polarised contexts, underscoring the danger when group loyalty overtakes democratic principles. Research shows that rising connectivity through social media paradoxically drives polarisation by fostering homophily – i.e., people bonding with similar views by repelling opposing groups and thus widening opinion gaps.

Defend neutrality

To counter these trends, society must reclaim respectful, open dialogue. This means defending neutrality and balanced judgment as moral imperatives, embracing complexity rather than binary choices. Genuine engagement requires seeing opponents as fellow humans, acknowledging multiple viewpoints with humility. Only by fostering understanding across divides can democratic governance and social trust be restored.

Choosing understanding over discord and reason over rage is not just idealistic but necessary. The middle path offers a way to navigate turbulent times with courage and integrity. It demands listening deeply, admitting imperfections and valuing balance as essential for mature democracy. Protecting neutrality and civil discourse shields society from polarisation's corrosive effects and ignites hope for peaceful coexistence and progress.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Many blocs, scant results

There are umpteen international groups and bodies with the white elephant, the United Nations, topping the list of those unable to draw the line on burning issues. Top leaders gather, flash toothy grins, adopt resolutions and release some press statements before dispersing. The follow-up action almost always misses the target. The United States, with its dollar strength, manipulates international happenings in its favour. India too coins catchy slogans such as "one earth, one family, one future" which mean nothing to the West. The West is only interested in continuing its hegemony. The world needs results. The West's narrow line should be rebutted.

Govardhana Myneedu,
Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh

In a world riven by war, inequality and mistrust, it is jarring to note the existence of many blocs. Each claims to solve global problems, but their proliferation only fragments efforts. Amid these exclusive clubs, only one truly universal institution still stands — the United Nations. It was conceived as the bedrock of global peace and multilateral cooperation, but its role seems increasingly sidelined. If we strengthen and reform the UN — giving it real power and relevance — perhaps we would not need so many competing groups. A reformed UN could serve as the single inclusive platform to address poverty, climate change, war and global justice. The multiplicity of summits only gives us the illusion of action.

T. Kailash Ditya,
Hyderabad

What the peace plan is

The Ukraine 'peace plan' is less a resolution and more a capitulation blueprint. That Ukraine should surrender territory and wager on Russia's goodwill not to advance further, and look to the prospect of Moscow's return to the G-8, is a tilt toward Russian interests. In truth, this mirrors shifting geopolitics around the war itself. Europe's industrial capacity to keep Ukraine armed is eroding under the weight of sustained commitments. The U.S., after two years of political fatigue and domestic preoccupations, has lost interest. It is now a conflict defined by material exhaustion. Under war fatigue, any peace plan would be an escape hatch for weary actors in the war. Peace extracted from weakness seldom endures. It merely pauses conflict.

R. Narayanan,
Navi Mumbai

Dharmendra

The passing of veteran actor Dharmendra has left millions of cinema lovers in deep sorrow. A timeless icon of Indian cinema, Dharmendra was not just an actor but an emotion for generations. Dharmendra won hearts with his effortless charm, powerful performances and unmatched versatility. From action and drama to romance and comedy, he excelled in every genre, leaving behind a legacy that will inspire actors.

Rukma Sharma,
Jalandhar, Punjab

Called the 'He-Man of Bollywood', Dharmendra was one of India's most iconic actors. With his natural acting and powerful dialogue delivery, he created unforgettable characterisation. We will miss a beloved figure in the Indian film world.

Deepika Kataria,
Chandigarh

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the postal address.

Bridging India's numeracy gap



Jatin Goyal

A civil servant presently serving in the Union Territory of Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. Views are personal

The National Education Policy 2020 rightly identifies Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as the cornerstone of all future learning. The NIPUN Bharat Mission has translated this policy intent into action by focusing on learning outcomes rather than just inputs. Foundational learning outcomes – stagnant for decades – have shown measurable improvement, as confirmed by government as well as independent surveys.

Despite these gains, numeracy continues to lag behind literacy. The Annual State of Education Report 2024 report shows that while 48.7% of Class 5 students can read fluently, only 30.7% can solve a basic division problem – an 18% point gap. No State reports higher numeracy than literacy outcomes. This situation makes it essential to examine numeracy more closely on the path to achieving foundational learning.

Integrated learning

The root of the numeracy problem lies in the cumulative nature of mathematics. Unlike language learning, where partial comprehension allows some progress, math is hierarchical and builds on itself. A missed concept in the lower grades, such as place value, can make future concepts like addition and decimals inaccessible. As a result, once gaps form, they tend to widen over time.

Traditional syllabus-driven teaching worsens the issue, as it advances without ensuring that students have grasped earlier concepts. Research and field experience from Teaching at the Right Level, an approach developed by the NGO Pratham, show that instruction must be aligned with a child's learning level rather than the curriculum. Without remedial interventions, grade-level teaching simply bypasses most learners, deepening existing disparities.

This gap is also evident in the disconnect between school learning and real-life application. A study by the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab shows that students who perform well on classroom math assessments often struggle to apply that knowledge in real-life market situations. Conversely, children engaged in real-world tasks, such as working in a shop, often find it difficult to transfer those skills into classroom-based math problems. This two-way disconnect underscores the need for integrated learning that brings real-life problem-solving into classrooms.

The practical consequences of the numeracy gap are significant. Students who lack foundational numeracy skills struggle in both math and science – subjects which record far higher failure rate than others – in board exams. Many adolescents exit school even before reaching the board exam stage, not because of a lack of access or interest, but because persistent learning gaps make classroom instruction incomprehensible, especially in middle and secondary school. The dread of math is therefore real, and results in closing the doors of higher education for many who can't pass Class 10 board exams or drop out earlier.

A multi-pronged response

Addressing this challenge calls for a multi-pronged response that builds on NIPUN's gains. The most urgent step is to extend interventions up to Class 8, given that about 70% of Class 5 and more than 50% of Class 8 students are still unable to perform basic division, as per the ASER 2024 report. Limiting foundational interventions to Class 3 is inadequate when upper primary children continue to miss out, many having lost crucial primary years due to COVID-19 disruptions. Experiences from the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, where extending FLN interventions into middle grades significantly improved outcomes as shown in the Parakh Rashtriya Survekshan 2024, confirm the value of such an approach.

Alongside this extension, it is equally important to move beyond "foundational" skills and introduce what may be called FLN+ skills – fractions, decimals, percentages, ratios, and integers – since these are critical for board exam success and later academic progression. ASER 2024's finding that nearly 70% of Class 5 students cannot solve division suggests that an overwhelming majority also lack higher-level skills, such as adding simple fractions (for example, 2/3 + 1/2). This must change through a concerted effort.

Pedagogy, too, must evolve, especially beyond the NIPUN hours: child-friendly, activity-based methods already used for FLN should be adapted for higher-level concepts, ensuring teaching aligns with students' actual learning levels rather than rigid grade-based syllabi. Finally, the classroom must connect more meaningfully with the outside world. By embedding literacy and numeracy in real-life contexts and encouraging everyday problem-solving, schools can make learning not only more relevant but also more enduring.

In conclusion, India's numeracy gap is both widespread and deep, intensifying as children progress through school. Its causes lie in the cumulative nature of mathematics and instructional approaches that fail to meet students where they are. The consequences – poor learning outcomes, board exam failures, and high dropout rates – threaten India's educational and economic future. The NIPUN Bharat Mission has already shown that foundational skills can improve at scale with focused effort. The next step is to build on these gains and extend success to upper primary levels and to FLN+ skills, especially in math. Doing so is not just an academic priority but a social and economic one – with direct implications for enrolment, employability, and equity.

Strengthening middle-grade support, introducing Foundational Literacy and Numeracy+ skills, and making math more connected to everyday life can transform India's early gains into lasting numeracy progress

The race for investments

Investors are flocking to Andhra Pradesh, triggering regional battles

STATE OF PLAY

V. Raghavendra
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Even as Tamil Nadu and Karnataka accuse Andhra Pradesh of pursuing a 'race to the bottom,' investors are still gravitating towards the State. At the CII Partnership Summit 2025 alone, Andhra Pradesh signed 613 Memoranda of Understanding committing a total investment of ₹13.25 lakh crore.

Some leaders in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have, in the past, criticised the Chandrababu Naidu-led Andhra Pradesh for offering land at extremely low prices along with other heavy incentives to attract industries. These Ministers contended that Andhra Pradesh has triggered an unhealthy competition among the States by going to great lengths to garner investments, while being unmindful of the negative impact that this is likely to have on the economy.

The spat between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu with Andhra Pradesh began when Google announced a $15 billion investment to set up a hyperscale AI data centre in Visakhapatnam. Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge dismissed as "baseless" reports that said that Google had chosen Andhra over Karnataka and added that the massive incentive package promised by the Naidu government to Google would result in an economic disaster. In response, Andhra Pradesh IT Minister, Nara Lokesh, said that the Karnataka government should think more about efficiency and fixing its problems instead of mocking Andhra Pradesh.

Mr. Lokesh has been focused on attracting IT companies and global capability



centres for which he brought in the LIFT (Land Incentive For Tech hubs) Policy, under which land is being leased out at just 99 paise per acre.

A few days ago, the South Korean footwear manufacturer, Hwaseung, announced that it would establish a non-leather footwear manufacturing unit at Kuppam in Chittoor district by investing nearly ₹900 crore. As Hwaseung had initially shown interest in setting up the unit in Tamil Nadu, State Industries Minister T.R.B. Rajaa commented on the development on social media. He said, "Investment promotion is not a regular everyday game. It's about balancing the State's need for certain sectors, jobs that will get created, incentives being given according to the area in which the investment is anchored etc. While some governments have the luxury of huge tracts of arid lands, others have high value land that can't be casually given away without assessing the outcome of incentives vis-a-vis the value of the jobs being created. We will not join the race to the bottom, of offering unrealistic packages". Meanwhile, former president of the BJP in Tamil Nadu, K. Annamalai, blamed M.K. Stalin and Mr. Rajaa for projects shifting to Andhra Pradesh.

Responding to these allegations, Mr. Naidu said in a press meet at the CII Summit that States should compete in a federal setup. He said all the investments finalised at the CII Summit were "serious", driving home the message that the Andhra government is doing its due diligence and not leaving entrepreneurs to fend for themselves after the signing of MoUs. Top officials in the government have been assigned the job of following up on each one of the proposals.

Karan Adani, the MD of Adani Ports & SEZ Ltd., has promised to invest ₹1 lakh crore in Andhra Pradesh in the next 10 years. GMR Group Chairman G. Mallikarjuna Rao has announced his plan to develop an aerocity at the Bhogapuram International Airport, which, he says, will be the world's biggest aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul facility. Anand Mahindra, Chairman of Mahindra and Mahindra Group, called Mr. Naidu "an unstoppable force of nature". Some captains of Indian industry, present at the CII Summit, said that Mr. Naidu is more a CEO than a Chief Minister. They cited his track record in mobilising marquee investments, which began with bringing Bill Gates to set up the Microsoft India Development Centre in Hyderabad in the late 1990s.

Government sources say 346 MOUs were signed for an investment of approximately ₹4.55 lakh crore during the CII Partnership Summit in 2016; 583 MoUs for ₹8.19 lakh crore worth of investments were signed in 2017; and 537 MoUs for ₹2.05 lakh crore worth of investments were signed in 2018. The government claims to have signed 613 MoUs for a total investment of ₹13.26 lakh crore in 2025.

These statements and developments vindicate the government's claim of doing its best to attract investments.

Widely quoted WHO norm of 1 doctor per 1,000 people is not official

The benchmark was repeatedly used by the government to compare doctor availability in India over the last decade

DATA POINT

Devyanshi Bihani

The Indian government often cites the World Health Organization (WHO)'s "benchmark" of one doctor for every 1,000 people. However, this is not a standard officially prescribed by the WHO.

Parliament Question and Answer records show that until at least 2010, the government maintained that the WHO had not prescribed any specific standard for the doctor-population ratio. But answers from 2015 and as recently as 2024 show otherwise. Replies in both these years cite the 1:1,000 ratio.

In both replies, the government used this benchmark to compare doctor availability in India. Since relying solely on registered allopathic doctors pushed the doctor-population ratio above the 1:1,000 benchmark, the government opted to include AYUSH practitioners as well, lowering the final ratio. Notably, while calculating the ratio for allopathic doctors, the government used only 80% of them, as only this proportion can be considered "available". However, when it came to AYUSH doctors, they did not apply the availability factor.

Chart 1 shows these doctor-population ratio calculations sourced from various Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha replies.

Setting these discrepancies aside, the ratio itself is questionable. The WHO, in a written response to *The Hindu*, clarified that it "does not provide recommendations for health worker population ratios at country level". The agency does not make such recommendations because ratios should be determined based on a country's health labour market dynamics and individual needs, it said.

Many experts have confirmed this. "There has never been any norm by the WHO for the doctor-population ratio," said public health expert Dr. Chandrakant Lahariya, a former staff member of the WHO. The number, he explained, was initially referenced as a WHO-recommended norm in some academic papers without attribution to any source within the WHO. Subsequently, it was cross-cited without verification and used by Parliament in its responses too.

Dr. Kiran Kumbhar, a public health expert and a historian of medicine and healthcare in India, said that there is "absolutely no indication anywhere in the WHO's documents about this recommendation". According to Dr. Kumbhar's article in *The India Forum*, the earliest official reference to the 1:1,000 figure appears in the Medical Council of India's 'Vision 2015' report, released in 2011. The document stated, based on expert consultations, that the targeted doctor population ratio would be 1:1,000 and projected that India could reach this by 2031.

While the WHO did not refer to the 1:1,000 ratio in its response, the global body stated that there are some global benchmarks used to monitor global health worker needs, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) composite index threshold, which is the most recent one. "It consists of the estimated number of skilled health workers needed to reach the minimum proportion of achievement of high coverage, defined as 80% or above for 12 selected health indicators linked to the SDGs," the WHO explained. The latest figure for that benchmark is 4.45 doctors, nurses, and midwives per 1,000 population, it said.

Health systems researcher Siddhesh Zadey, co-founder of the Association for Socially Applicable Research India, explained the origins of this composite figure. "First, in 2006, they said the minimum number should be 2.25 per 1,000 and then revised it to 4.45 later," he said. Mr. Zadey explained that many misrepresented the composite figure, assuming that within it, a specific portion would be doctors and the rest nurses and midwives. "However, the WHO was clear that the combined group had to be 2.25; they never stated that within that, there is a specific distribution," he said.

Mr. Zadey argued that separate figures for doctors are often cited to justify the need for more medical colleges. "In the last 10 years, we have seen that this number has become political. It is being weaponised by the AYUSH side of health workforce, which is pitching that the target can be reached if they are included," he said.

Dr. Lahariya argued that while composite figures are useful in assessing the overall performance, these have limited relevance because there is inequitable distribution. "Within a country, there can be States that have achieved varying ratios per thousand population," he said.

The WHO response stated that the latest estimates for the composite and individual figures can be accessed from the National Health Workforce Accounts Data Portal. **Chart 2** plots the estimated number of doctors per 1,000 population and **Chart 3** plots the estimated number of doctors, nurses and midwives per 1,000 population (the composite figure) using the latest data for countries where they are available.

With 0.7 doctors per 1,000 people, India ranked 118 out of 181 countries in Chart 2. With a composite figure of 3.06 per 1,000 people – behind the 4.45 mark cited by the WHO – India ranked 122 of the 181 countries in Chart 3.

Dr. Kumbhar argued that India has always had a sufficient number of doctors; very few public health experts had ever claimed there was a paucity. It is only recently, after the 1:1,000 ratio came into the picture, that questions are being raised.

The real crisis is not the average number, Mr. Zadey said. "We know that we have a huge rural-urban disparity. In rural areas, we are nowhere close to the ideal composite threshold."



Chart 1: Population served by each doctor as cited in Parliament replies across years

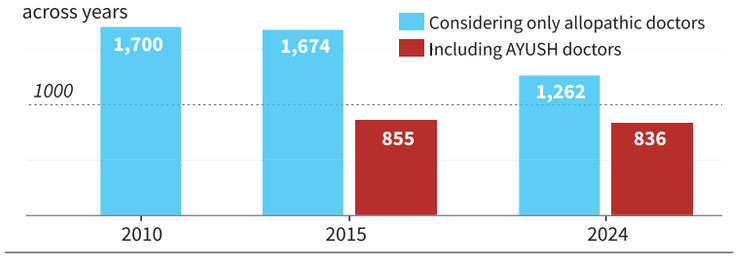


Chart 2: The estimated number of doctors per 1,000 population. Each circle corresponds to a country. Only countries with such data were considered

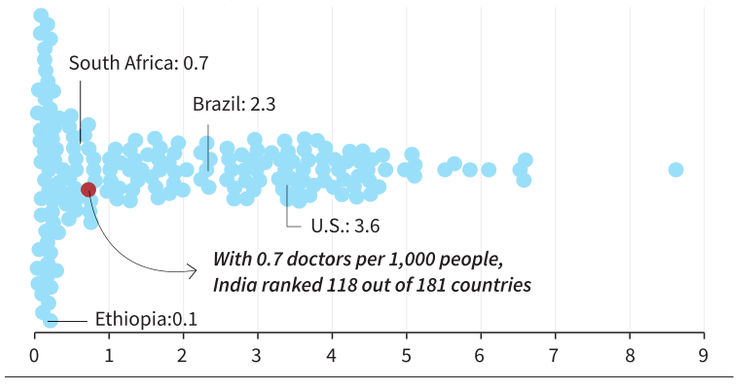
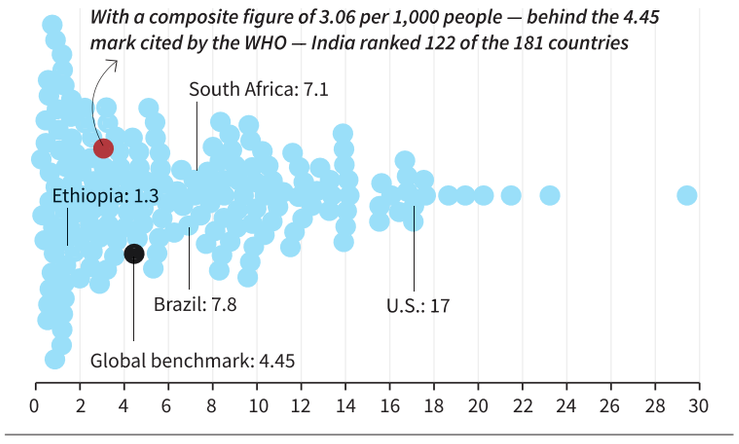


Chart 3: The estimated number of doctors, nurses and midwives per 1,000 population (the composite figure)



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 25, 1975

Ike and Kennedy 'knew of CIA plots'

Washington, Nov. 24: A key figure in the investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency has said he believes that both Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy were aware of assassination plots of foreign leaders, especially the Cuban Prime Minister, Mr. Fidel Castro.

Mr. David Belin, former Executive Director of the CIA Commission investigation headed by the Vice-President Mr. Nelson Rockefeller, said that since the then head of the CIA, Mr. Allen Dulles, was the brother of then Secretary of State, Mr. John Foster Dulles, during the Eisenhower years, and because Mr. Robert Kennedy was the Attorney-General during his brother's Administration, he "assumed" the Presidents were aware of the plots.

"The Presidents could read between the lines," Mr. Belin said on television, because they were "not naive".

Mr. Belin added the 347-page report issued last Thursday by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence appeared to be "a thorough job" but he felt it went "easy on past Presidents and their knowledge of assassination plots".

"There is evidence in conflict about their knowledge because they were in sophisticated Washington, not the hinterlands," he said.

Mr. Belin, who has served as a senior member of the Warren Commission which investigated the assassination of President Kennedy, called for a Congressional enquiry into the report.

He said he thought the probe would bear out the Commission finding that Lee Harvey Oswald alone killed President Kennedy and that Jack Ruby also was acting alone when he killed Oswald.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO NOVEMBER 25, 1925

Egyptian politics

Cairo, Nov. 24: All Egyptian provinces, with one or two exceptions, have sent the letters to King Fuad declaring that they unite with the nation in its desire for the revival of representative parliamentary life. If this is not granted it will cause unrest which the provinces know does not accord with His Majesty's wishes. Opposition groups are protesting against the intention of the Ministry to promulgate a new electoral law declaring that the old parliament must stand.

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Amount pledged by the EIB for African renewables projects

2.3 In $ billion. The European Investment Bank (EIB) is pledging more than two billion euros ($2.3 billion) for financing renewable energy projects on the African continent over the next two years. The projects will include hydroelectric, solar and wind power plants. REUTERS

Increase in India's marine sector exports from April to October

16.18 In per cent. India's marine sector exports rose to $4.87 billion during April-October this fiscal mainly on account of healthy growth in non-U.S. markets, including China, Vietnam, Russia, Canada and the U.K., according to Commerce Ministry data. PTI

Time granted by Mozambique to firms to build LNG facilities

30 years. Mozambique has granted its top state-owned companies, including national oil firm ENH, a 30-year concession to build and operate natural gas facilities at the Port of Beira and the smaller Inhassoro site, the government said on Monday. REUTERS

Number of teachers to be recruited by the Tripura government

1,733 Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said that the State government has initiated the process to recruit 1,733 teachers across various categories to boost the education ecosystem. Around 5,000 people have been appointed on a contractual basis. PTI

Persons booked for involvement in cybercrime in Delhi

95 The Delhi Police has detained 381 people, booked 95 suspects in organised cyber fraud cases and registered 24 FIRs in the Central Delhi district under 'Operation CyHawk' — one of its largest crackdowns on cybercrime — an official said. PTI

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What does the SC's advisory opinion imply?

What were the questions raised by the Presidential reference as a result of a judgment delivered in April 2025? What were the key points delivered by the Supreme Court in its opinion? Should Governors act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan.R

The story so far:
The Supreme Court has provided its opinion on a Presidential reference made under Article 143. In its opinion, it has largely negated the decision of a two-judge Bench that was delivered in April 2025.

What was the Presidential reference?
The current reference is the result of a two-judge Bench judgment in *State of Tamil Nadu versus Governor of Tamil Nadu* in April 2025, that had specified a timeline of three months for Governors and the President to act on Bills passed by State legislatures. The court held that decisions by Governors and the President on such Bills are subject to judicial review. It had exercised its extraordinary power under Article 142 and granted 'deemed assent' to Bills passed by Tamil Nadu assembly that were not assented to by the Governor.

The present reference had raised 14 questions, primarily surrounding the interpretation of Articles 200 and 201, for the court's opinion. These questions deal with the authority of the courts to prescribe timelines when they are not specified in the Constitution. The government had questioned whether the actions of Governors and the President can be made justiciable at a stage prior to the enactment of a Bill into a law. The reference also sought an opinion on the extent of powers that can be exercised by the Supreme Court under Article 142.

What is the current opinion?
A five-judge Bench of the top Court delivered its opinion on the questions raised. It stated that this reference was a 'functional reference', that strikes at the root of day-to-day functioning of constitutional functionaries and the interplay between State legislature, Governor and the President. Key points of the opinion are summarised below.



The Supreme Court of India. GETTY IMAGES

First, the Governor has three constitutional options under Article 200 when a Bill passed by State legislature is presented for his/her assent, namely to assent, or reserve the Bill for consideration of the President, or withhold assent and return the Bill to legislature with comments. Second, the Governor enjoys discretion in choosing from these three options and is not bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. Third, the discharge of functions by the Governor under Article 200 is not justiciable but in case of glaring circumstances of prolonged and unexplained inaction, the court can issue a limited mandamus for the Governor to discharge his/her function on Bills presented. Fourth, in the absence of constitutionally prescribed time limits, the court cannot judicially prescribe timelines for action by the President or Governor. Fifth, the decisions of the President and Governor under Articles 201 and 200 respectively are not justiciable before a Bill is enacted into a law. Finally, the powers of the Supreme Court under Article 142 cannot substitute the powers vested on the President/Governor under the Constitution. Hence, there is no allowance for the concept of 'deemed assent' of Bills.

What are the issues?
The Sarkaria Commission (1987), had opined that it is only the reservation of Bills for consideration of the President, that too under rare cases of patent unconstitutionality, that can be implied as a discretionary power of the Governor. The Supreme Court in various cases including in *Shamsher Singh* (1974) and *Nabam Rebia* (2016), had held that the Governors should act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers. However, in the present opinion, the court has interpreted these cases to conclude that actions under Article 200, with respect to a Bill presented for assent, fall under the discretionary powers of the Governor. This has the potential to derail the legislative intent of popularly elected State governments.

With respect to time limits, the Punchhi Commission (2010), had recommended that the Governor should take a decision with respect to a Bill presented for his/her assent within a period of six months. The court in its own judgment in the *K. M. Singh* case (2020), had stipulated a time limit of three months for Speakers to decide on disqualification petitions though no time limit has been prescribed in the Constitution. The verdict of the division bench in the *State of Tamil Nadu* case to provide time limits to Governors and the President was a purposive and progressive interpretation of the Constitution. The current opinion has negated this position.

What can be the way forward?
The underlying disease that has plagued our federal set up has been the politicisation of the gubernatorial post. The Governor acts as an appointee of the Centre for maintaining unity and integrity of the nation. However, federalism is also a basic feature of our Constitution. This opinion should not become an alibi for the Governor's office to thwart the policies of popularly elected houses in the States. The Governors should display responsible urgency in providing assent to Bills passed by State legislatures.

Rangarajan.R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Courseware on Polity Simplified'. He currently trains at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

- The current reference is the result of the judgment in *State of Tamil Nadu versus Governor of Tamil Nadu* that had specified a timeline of three months for Governors and the President to act on Bills passed by State legislatures.
- The present reference had raised 14 questions, primarily surrounding the interpretation of Articles 200 and 201, for the court's opinion.
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Why do infant deaths persist in tribal-dominated Melghat?

How have officials responded to the Bombay High Court's statements?

Snehal Mutha

The story so far:
The Bombay High Court, on November 12, pulled up the Maharashtra and Union governments for an "extremely casual" approach to the disturbing number of infant deaths due to malnutrition in the tribal-dominated region of Melghat in Amravati. During the hearing, a petitioner claimed that from June 2025, 65 infants aged between zero and six months had died due to malnutrition in Melghat, while more than 220 children were in the Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) category, out of which 50% may die if no help is provided.

What is the situation in Melghat?
The issue of infant and maternal deaths due to malnutrition and lack of maternal healthcare has always persisted in Melghat, home to Korku tribal communities, despite three decades of government interventions. Fatalities have fluctuated over the past decade. According to data from the Amravati Zilla Parishad, from April 2024 to March 2025, 96 infants died, and in the last seven months of this year, 61 children have died. Officials from the Zilla Parishad office, however, state that most of these deaths are not just because of malnutrition but other underlying causes such as anaemia, sickle cell disease, pneumonia, delays in treatment due to lack of connectivity, and others. "All these deaths are not because of malnutrition but other issues. We are running a hot food scheme in the Melghat areas, providing eggs and bananas four times a week. We have set up the village child development centre (VCDC) in all gram panchayats to monitor SAM cases," said Amravati ZP Chief Executive Officer, Sanjita Mohapatra, adding that peripheral issues still needed to be addressed. The petitioner argued that even though the cause of death has been recorded as pneumonia or other causes, malnutrition is also a reason.

Maharashtra's Women and Child Welfare Department Minister stated that Poshan tracker data recorded 1,82,443 malnourished children across the State. The Indian Institute of Population Sciences noted that Maharashtra continues to perform poorly on child nutrition, with 35% of children under five stunted and 35% underweight.

What are the challenges?
Peripheral issues that the State government point to include lack of proper roads to reach a hospital in time, inadequate electricity supply to homes, lack of primary healthcare centres, the prevalence of substance abuse and more. According to experts working in Melghat, multiple government departments that execute programmes operate in silos, resulting in inconsistent supplement delivery, irregular monitoring, and weak coordination to sustain policies.

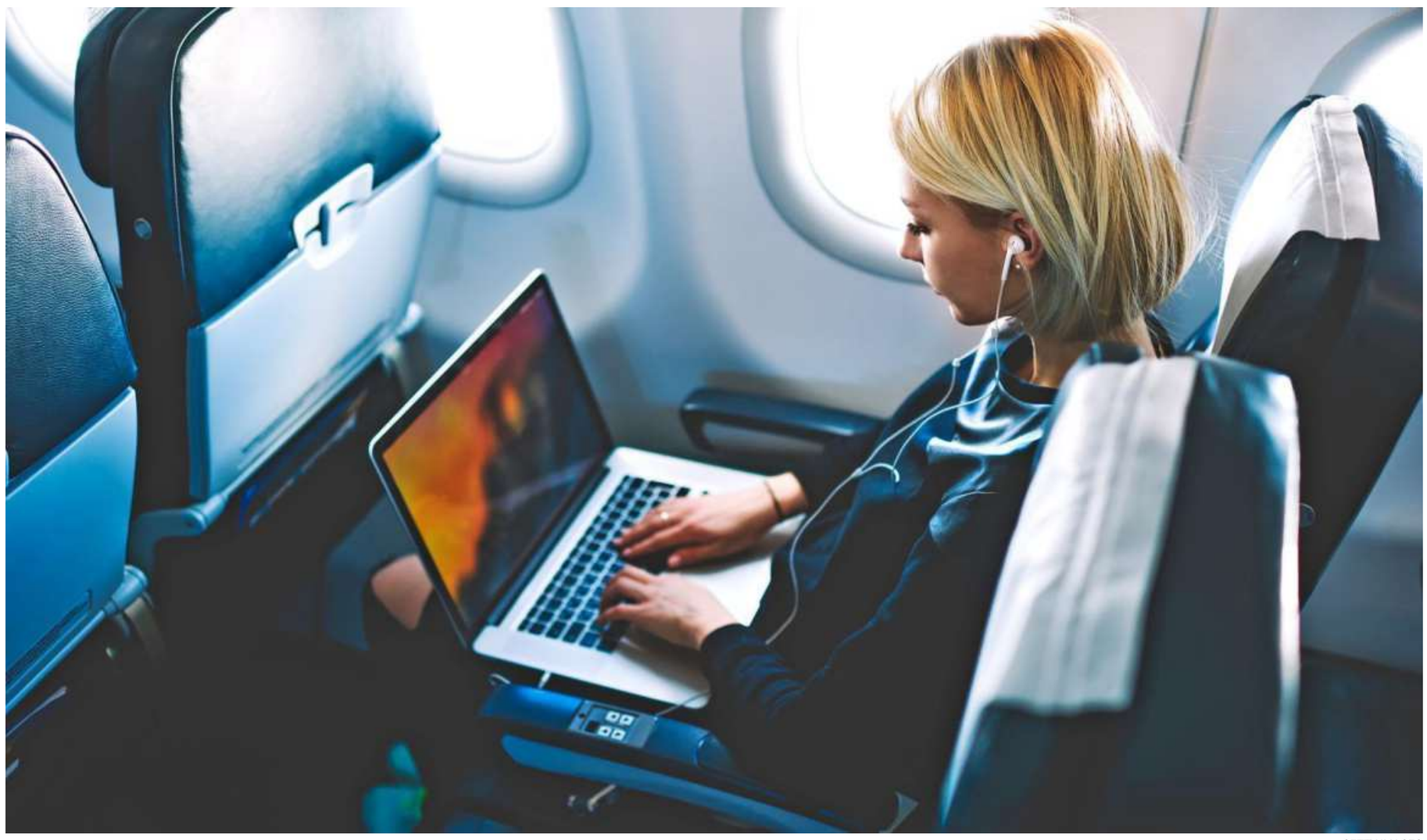
Finding and retaining doctors, including paediatricians, gynaecologists, and other hospital staff members, remains a major challenge as the absconding rate (absent from work) is high. Ms. Mohapatra says that even though salary and incentives have increased, the mindset of doctors remain unchanged. She also pointed out that the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), which is a key indicator of child health, has improved in Melghat to 16.5 while Maharashtra's IMR is 15 as per the Sample Registration System data of 2024-25. Intergenerational malnutrition presents another challenge, as women often enter pregnancy severely underweight and anaemic, leading to low-birth-weight babies, who then have weakened immunity and are vulnerable to infections.

What are expert-approved solutions?
The eradication of malnutrition is not limited to providing mid-day meals or food supplies, say experts. It also involves creating a well-oiled healthcare system, where nutrition is provided for both mothers and children; creating a cadre of ASHA workers with a strong knowledge of health; caring for co-morbidities through health and nutrition programmes; promoting community-centred behavioural change, and developing civic and health infrastructure.

THE GIST

- The issue of infant and maternal deaths due to malnutrition and lack of maternal healthcare has always persisted in Melghat, home to Korku tribal communities, despite three decades of government interventions.
- Peripheral issues that the State government point to include lack of proper roads to reach a hospital in time, inadequate electricity supply to homes, lack of primary healthcare centres, the prevalence of substance abuse and more.
- The eradication of malnutrition is not limited to providing mid-day meals or food supplies say officials.

BUILDING BLOCKS



GETTY IMAGES

How are passengers able to access the Internet on aeroplanes?

In-flight Internet has become a standard service on commercial flights, utilising air-to-ground and satellite systems to meet growing passenger demand for connectivity while navigating technical and regulatory challenges

Vasudevan Mukunth

Passenger Internet on aeroplanes used to be rare in the 2010s but has become almost commonplace today. On most flights, the basic idea is that the whole aeroplane is treated like a flying Wi-Fi router that connects to the rest of the Internet through a long backhaul link. This means your phone or laptop never talks directly to the ground. Instead it talks to a Wi-Fi access point inside the cabin, which then sends your data out of the aircraft via radio links.

How is the backhaul setup?

The backhaul link these days comes in two main forms: air-to-ground (ATG) and via satellite. In the ATG system, the aeroplane connects to special cellular-like towers on the ground. These towers have antennae pointing up at the sky. The plane's antennae – often mounted on the underside – maintains a radio link with whichever tower is currently in range ('radio link' just means they send and receive electromagnetic signals in the radio frequency range, 3-3,000,000,000 kHz). As the plane flies, the ATG system hands off the connection from one tower to the next, similar to how your phone switches between cell towers if you're on a call in a moving vehicle.

Obviously this arrangement works well over land, where there's a dense coverage of towers, but fails over oceans, deserts, and in polar areas – all places with fewer or no towers. This is where satellites help.

Satellite systems are more flexible because they don't care whether an aeroplane is over land or water. In this system, the aeroplane uses a dish or phased-array antenna, usually inside a bespoke hump-shaped structure on top of the fuselage, that's pointed towards the sky. This antenna will transmit data to a satellite in orbit, which will relay the data to a ground station connected to the regular Internet.

Historically, these satellites have been in geostationary orbit, which is a circular orbit 35,786 km above sea level. This means, even at the speed of light, there's a noticeable data latency. A signal round-trip time of several hundred milliseconds is common. Newer systems use satellite constellations that are located in low-earth orbit, that is, 150-2,000 km above sea level. Since these satellites are much closer to ground stations, the latency is lower. Sometimes they also allow for higher bandwidth if the aeroplane's antennae can track fast-moving satellites and hand off between them.

How are connections provided to users?

Inside the aeroplane, the connectivity network resembles that in a small office. There's a central server or router, a satellite or ATG modem, and several Wi-Fi access points distributed through the cabin. When you connect, your device joins this local Wi-Fi network. A captive portal page appears in your browser where you either pay, log in with a frequent-flyer account or accept some terms of use. Once you're authenticated, the onboard network will start forwarding your traffic over the ATG or satellite link.

The airline or provider can shape or in many ways filter this traffic, and often does. For instance, providers may block high-bitrate video streaming or VoIP calls, force images to be compressed, and aggressively cache web pages to load faster over the constrained data link.

The in-flight bandwidth is almost always lower than home broadband connections and it's also shared among everyone on board. If a single satellite beam is serving multiple aircraft at once, they may all be competing for the same capacity. This is why performance varies so much between flights, routes, times of day, and providers. More sophisticated networks try to manage this challenge by dynamically allocating bandwidth and upgrading to higher-throughput satellites or satellite constellations. Even then the basic constraints of limited spectrum, distance, and shared use remain.

Don't signals interfere with operations?

When cabin crew ask you to switch your phone off for take-off and landing and to use 'airplane mode' the rest of the time, they're mainly trying to eliminate lots of uncontrolled radio transmitters inside the cabin. A phone whose mobile (that is, cellular) radio is on does several things that are awkward for both aviation and telecom regulators. It periodically 'shouts' loudly in radio terms, scans across multiple bands to find towers, and maintains a connection. In a cabin with a couple hundred phones, that creates a messy blast of radio noise at unpredictable times and frequencies – much like a noisy playground. In the worst-case scenario, some of that energy could be very close to the frequencies aeroplane radios, sensors and navigation beacons use.

While contemporary aeroplanes are well-shielded and the actual risk is very low, regulators prefer a conservative approach that minimises known unknowns.

Further, a plane full of phones talking directly to towers on the ground still moves quickly and is visible to many towers at once. These quirks can confuse handover algorithms and overuse capacity in the cellular network. This is why telecommunications rules in many places explicitly forbid phones from connecting to terrestrial mobile networks at cruising altitude, and 'airplane mode' is a simple way to comply.

To its advantage, passenger Internet uses equipment that's part of the aircraft's certified systems. The Wi-Fi access points inside the cabin and the satellite or ATG radios that link the aeroplane to the outside world are all installed and tested together with the avionics. The engineers who design them also pick frequencies that are well separated from the bands that critical onboard systems use and design the antennae and cabling to minimise signal 'leaks'. They're also expected to prove (through testing) that none of these systems can fail in a way that also destabilises the aeroplane.

Taken together the in-flight Internet apparatus addresses the radio interference risks differently from how individual cellphones do, quelling regulators' anxieties while allowing you to stay online.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Bollywood actor Dharmendra passed away on Monday. Here is a quiz on one of the most well-known, successful actors in Hindi cinema

Sindhu Nagaraj

QUESTION 1

For several of his on-screen roles in Hindi films, what was Dharmendra fondly called?

QUESTION 2

This 1962 Hindi war-drama film proved to be a major critical and commercial success for Dharmendra. The film had a superhero song, sung by Mohammed Rafi, "Kar Chale Ham Fida". Name the film.

QUESTION 3

In which film in 1971 (considered as Raj Kapoor's magnum opus) did Dharmendra play a supporting role? This film attained a cult status in the following years.

QUESTION 4

Vijay Anand's romantic thriller *Blackmail* was an unsuccessful venture, critically and commercially, but reception later improved, with many calling it one of Anand's most underrated works. Which song from the film featuring Dharmendra and Rakhee was a chartbuster and remains popular in modern culture?

QUESTION 5

When Dharmendra received the Filmfare Lifetime Achievement Award, which actor remarked, "Whenever I get to meet with God Almighty, I will set before him my only complaint—why did you not make me as handsome as Dharmendra"?



Visual question:
Identify this film from the image. Which is the song associated with the image?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. Salilda went underground here after arrest warrants were issued for his support to the peasant movement. **Ans: Sunderbans**
2. This composition was inspired by Mozart's 40th Symphony. **Ans: 'Itna Na Mujhse Tu Pyar Badha' for the film *Chhaya***
3. Salida became a household name in Kerala for his superb work in this film. **Ans: *Chemmeen***
4. In this song in *Half Ticket,* Kishore Kumar croons in both male and female voices. **Ans: 'Aake Seedhi Lagi Dil Pe'**
5. This popular filmmaker once remarked 'He can play almost any instrument he lays his hands on, from the tabla to the sarod, from the piano to the piccolo'. **Ans: Raj Kapoor**
Visual: Name this Bimal Roy classic. **Ans: *Do Bigha Zameen***
Early Birds: Siddhartha Viswanathan| Sunil Madhavan| Sudhir Thapa| Soumendra Banerjee| Balakrishnan Narayanan



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

S. Upendran

What does 'to have egg on one's face mean'? (N. C. Veerachari, Hyderabad)
This is an informal expression mainly used in British English. When you have egg on your face, you are made to look foolish or feel embarrassed because of something that you have done. For example, the latest scandal has left the President with egg on his face. Rahul went around telling everyone that he would win the tournament. He lost in the first round. Now he has egg on his face. Gopa went around telling everyone that Sunita would definitely marry him. A week ago, she ran away with another man. Poor Gopa has egg on his face.

What is the meaning of 'do not look a gift horse in the mouth'? (M. Ratnaji Rao, Vishakapatnam)
This idiomatic expression means do not try to find fault with something that has been given to you as a gift. In other words, don't complain about a gift that you have received. Here are a few examples. My friend Mohan complained about the second-hand cycle that his aunt had bought him. I told him not to look a gift horse in the mouth. Don't complain about the house that your father-in-law has bought for your wife. You shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth. Bala always complains about the gifts I give him. He shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth.

What is the difference between 'breakfast' and 'tiffin'? (Somasundara, Vijayanagar, Mysore)
'Tiffin' is a word that is seldom used by native speakers of English. In fact, some dictionaries do not even include this word. Even within India, this word seems to be more popular in the South than in the North. Dictionaries define 'tiffin' as 'a light meal – lunch'. In India however, a tiffin refers to a light meal which can be eaten at any time of the day. For example, we have hotels serving tiffin early in the morning. One often hears a person saying that he had a 'light tiffin' early in the evening. 'Breakfast', on the other hand, is the first meal of the day and it is always eaten in the morning.

Is it correct to say 'Even in the twilight years of his life, he worked like a Trojan horse'? (Thomas Eapen, Red Hills, Hyderabad)
What the writer probably meant to say was '...he worked like a Trojan' and not a 'Trojan horse'. There is a big difference in meaning between the two words. When you say that someone works like a Trojan it means he works really hard. For example, our new Chairman works like a Trojan. Unlike the word Trojan, the word 'Trojan horse' has a very negative meaning. A 'Trojan horse' is a person or a thing that enters something secretly in order to attack it. The union members suspect the Management of using Rahul as a Trojan horse to break the strike.

During the war with Troy, the Greeks built a gigantic wooden horse and hid some soldiers inside it. The unsuspecting Trojans dragged the horse into the city of Troy. At night, the Greek soldiers who were hiding inside the horse opened the gates to the city of Troy. The Greek army entered the city and burnt it.

Published in The Hindu on October 6, 1998.

Word of the day

Filibuster:
a legislator who gives long speeches in an effort to delay or obstruct legislation that they oppose; a tactic for delaying or obstructing legislation by making long speeches; obstruct deliberately by delaying

Usage: *They engaged in a filibuster that lasted for over a month.*

Pronunciation: newsth.live/filibusterpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ˈfɪlɪbʌstə(ɹ)/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

INBRIEF



Rupee gains 50 paise against U.S. Dollar as RBI steps in

The rupee on Monday appreciated 50 paise to settle at 89.16 against the U.S. dollar as compared with its Friday's close of 89.66, its historic low. "The rupee gained the most among the Asian currencies on likely intervention from the central bank and MSCI index rebalancing related flows. However, the trend and bias remain weak amid foreign fund outflows, widening trade deficit and stronger dollar index against major currencies," said Dilip Parmar of HDFC Securities.

Singapore firm Sembcorp said to plan IPO of Indian unit

Singapore's Temasek-backed Sembcorp Industries has started talks over an initial public offering of its India unit in Mumbai and appointed three investment banks, including Citi and HSBC, three sources familiar with the matter said. Talks are at an early stage and no decision has been made on the size of the offering. The move marks Sembcorp's second attempt to list its India business after withdrawing a draft prospectus in 2019 to inject new equity. REUTERS

SBI Ventures plans ₹2,000 cr. climate-focussed fund

SBI Ventures, an alternative asset manager promoted by State Bank of India (SBI), intends to raise ₹2,000 crore for its third climate-focused fund to invest in start-ups. It will help unlock green growth, a new financial opportunity, SBI Ventures Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Prem Prabhakar said at an event in New Delhi. Domestic and global investors will be roped in for the fund, and the roadshow will start early next year, he said. PTI

'Oct. demand pick-up points to a resilient growth outlook'

Concerns persist about the heightened exuberance in global equity markets, raising questions about its sustainability and its implications for financial stability, officials write in RBI Bulletin

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

A further pick-up in demand conditions witnessed in October 2025 points towards a resilient growth outlook, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) officials wrote in the November edition of RBI Bulletin released on Monday.

They said despite continued global headwinds, Indian economy showed signs of a further pick up in momentum.

"Available high-frequency indicators for October suggest a robust expansion in both manufacturing and services activities, supported by festive season demand and the ongoing positive impact of the GST reforms," they wrote in the article 'State of the Economy'.

Stating that headline inflation had moderated and fallen to a historic low in October and remained below the target rate, they said it was significantly helped by favourable supply-side factors, including the prospects of a good kharif season and the reduction of GST rates.



Food 'chain': The deflation in the food group deepened on account of a decline in the prices of vegetables, pulses and spices. FILE PHOTO

Inflation moderation

Headline CPI inflation, moderated to 0.3% in October 2025 from 1.4% in September.

The fall in inflation was driven by the deepening of deflation in food prices and impact of the GST rate cut on goods and services prices, amid large favourable base effects, they wrote. The deflation in the food group deepened on account of a decline in the prices of vegetables, pulses and spices. Inflation in subgroups such as cereals, meat and fish, milk and products, eggs, oils and fats, fruits, prepared meals, and non-alcoholic beverages moderated, they added.

"The external sector's capacity to absorb shocks has also improved over time, building resilience amid global trade policy uncertainties," they emphasised in the article.

Pointing to the World Bank's Financial Sector Assessment (FSA) report of October 2025, they said the improved macroeconomic frameworks and outcomes had not only enhanced the ability of financial institutions to support the macroeconomy, but also allowed the Reserve Bank to better calibrate regulatory measures, improve the efficiency of financial intermediation, and augment the flow of credit to the broader economy.

The fiscal, monetary, and regulatory measures undertaken so far this year should pave the way for a virtuous cycle of higher private investment, productivity, and growth, leading to long-term economic resilience, the officials wrote.

"Concerns persist about the heightened exuberance in global equity markets, raising questions about its sustainability and its implications for financial stability," they said.

India, Canada are natural allies, says Goyal

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India and Canada have "tremendous potential" to work together on critical minerals, nuclear energy, and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said.

This comes a day after the Prime Ministers of the two countries met at the G20 summit and agreed to begin negotiations for a "high-ambition" Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

"Canada and India are natural allies," Mr. Goyal said while addressing the Indo-Canadian Business Chamber in New Delhi.

'Not competing'

"We don't compete with each other, we actually complement each other."

The office of the Canadian Prime Minister also confirmed on Sunday that Mr. Carney had accepted Mr. Modi's invitation to visit India in "early 2026".

"There is a lot we can learn from Canada and a lot that we can offer Canada," Mr. Goyal emphasised.

'Private sector reported 8% YoY sales growth in Q2'

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Listed private non-financial companies reported 8% year-on-year (YoY) sales income growth during Q2 FY26 from 5.5% growth seen in the previous quarter and 5.4% growth in Q2 FY25, as per data released by the RBI on Monday. The growth was led by improvement in sales growth across all the major sectors.

Sales of 1,775 listed private manufacturing companies rose 8.5% YoY during Q2FY26 compared with 5.3% in the previous quarter, mainly driven by higher sales growth in automobiles, food products, electrical machinery and chemicals industries.

IT companies recorded a rise of 7.8% YoY in their sales during Q2FY26 from 6% in the previous quarter.

Sales of non-IT services companies recorded a double-digit growth of 10.6% in Q2FY26 compared with 7.5% growth in the previous quarter, primarily due to higher sales growth recorded by wholesale and retail trade companies. Manufacturing companies' expenses on raw material rose 9% YoY during Q2FY26 in consonance with their sales growth; raw material to sales ratio increased to 55.9% from 54.1% in the previous quarter.

Staff cost of manufacturing, IT and non-IT services companies rose by 9.2%, 6% and 8.9%, respectively during Q2FY26, higher than the previous quarter.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	MONDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	84,901	-0.39
US Dollar	89.16	0.55
Gold	1,25,400	-0.55
Brent oil	62.87	—

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	2399.20	-23.10
Adani Ports	1485.90	6.10
Apollo Hosp	7354.50	-36.50
Asian Paints	2879.20	2.60
Axis Bank	1269.00	-6.80
Bajaj Auto	9007.50	115.50
Bajaj Finserv	2030.80	-21.60
Bajaj Finance	994.00	-10.10
Bharat Elec	403.80	-12.55
Bharti Airtel	2152.10	-10.60
Cipla	1504.00	-7.80
Coal India	372.55	-5.65
Dr Reddys Lab	1226.20	-17.70
Eicher Motors	7258.50	124.00
Eternal Ltd.	301.00	-0.95
Grasim Ind	2688.70	-46.10
HCL Tech	1610.40	2.40
HDFC Bank	999.15	1.10
HDFC Life	761.65	-2.35
Hindalco	774.65	-3.05
Hind Unilever	2424.20	-9.50
ICICI Bank	1368.40	-1.10
IntGlobeAvi	5805.50	-38.00
Infosys	1548.00	3.00
ITC	403.55	-4.30
Jio Financial Servic-es Ltd.	299.85	-3.70
JSW Steel	1106.00	-34.30
Kotak Bank	2087.30	-0.50
L&T	4013.30	-11.60
M&M	3690.80	-58.80
Maruti Suzuki	15958.00	-19.00
Max Healthcare	1155.80	-25.30
NestleIndia	1269.20	-11.50
NTPC	323.45	-3.20
ONGC	245.75	-1.20
PowerGrid Corp	275.80	-1.80
Reliance Ind	1535.90	-10.70
SBI Life	2014.80	-7.70
State Bank	970.60	-2.00
Shriram Finance Ltd.	828.20	4.90
Sun Pharma	1780.80	1.10
TataConsumerPro-duct	1186.00	2.90
Tata Steel	165.36	-2.64
TCS	3141.20	-9.40
Tech Mahindra	1494.70	33.20
Titan	3874.30	-29.90
Tata Motors PV	358.30	-3.95
Trent Ltd.	4310.90	-48.20
UltraTech Cement	11584.00	-145.00
Wipro	247.27	2.78

Afghanistan offers tax exemption to investors

Afghanistan Industry and Commerce Minister Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi on Monday said his government is ready to offer five years of tax breaks to firms investing in new sectors. PTI

SC to quash Sandesaras' fraud cases on payment of ₹5,100 cr. by Dec. 17

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court (SC) directed quashing all criminal proceedings against the fugitive Sandesara brothers in the Sterling Biotech bank fraud case, if they deposit ₹5,100 crore as a 'full and final payment' to lender banks.

"If the petitioners (Sandesara brothers) are ready to deposit the amount as settled in the one-time settlement (OTS), and public money comes back to lender banks, the continuation of the criminal proceedings would not serve any useful purpose," said a Bench headed by J.K. Maheshwari, taking a pragmatic approach.



The SC clarified the directions in the case shall not be treated as a precedent.

However, the SC clarified its directions were based on the peculiar facts and circumstances of this case, and 'therefore, they shall not be treated as a precedent'.

The court made it clear that its order quashing the criminal proceedings against the brothers would become operative only on the full and final payment of ₹5,100 crore on or before December 17, 2025.

The Bench directed the amount to be deposited with the Supreme Court Registry and kept in a short-term and interest-bearing fixed deposit account with a nationalised bank till disbursement among the lender banks.

The order recorded the amount of defalcation in the FIR was ₹5,383 crore. The OTS, with respect to the petitioners' Indian firms, with the banks was for ₹3,826 crore and for foreign firms, being guarantor, was for ₹2,935 crore, bringing the total sum to ₹6,761 crore.

"Out of the said amount, the petitioners voluntarily deposited a fraction of the total amount, which comes to around ₹3,507.63 crore, leaving the remaining dues to ₹3,253.37 crore," the court observed.

The lender banks initiated proceedings under Insolvency Bankruptcy Code, 2016 and recoveries of ₹1,192 crore were made. However, of the total OTS amount, the upaid balance came to ₹2,061.37 crore.

The turning point in the case came when the Solicitor General, representing the government and the probe agencies, submitted a demand for ₹5,100 crore and the brothers agreed to pay the amount.

One for the album



Lighter moment: U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, U.S. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, Denmark's Foreign Affairs Minister Lars Lokke Rassmussen and EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Interinstitutional relations and Transparency Maros Sefcovic pose for a family photo at the end of an EU Foreign Affairs Council about Trade in Brussels on Monday. AFP

'Anti pilot-poaching plan in India's interest'

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Policies that support pilot retention and prevent their poaching by foreign carriers is in "national interest" as aviation is a catalyst for economic development and the country's "soft power", Air India CEO Campbell Wilson said.

"It is not just a turnaround of Air India. It's an investment being made in critical, economic, and catalytic infrastructure. And, anything from a policy perspective that can facilitate this, I think is in the national interest," Mr. Wilson said in response to a question from *The Hindu* on whether the airline supported measures such as a six-month notice period for pilots to stop them from joining international players amid hectic expansion in regions like Saudi Arabia and the UAE that lure pilots with tax-free salaries.



Campbell Wilson

Recently, IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers said it would be "disturbing" to lose Indian pilots to foreign airlines.

NBFC AUM to grow at 19%, cross ₹50 lakh crore next fiscal: Crisil Ratings

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

In home loans, growth is estimated at 12-13% over the two fiscals, down from 14% last fiscal

The assets under management (AUM) of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) would grow at 18-19% this fiscal and the next, driven by whetted consumption demand, and cross the ₹50 lakh crore mark by March 2027, according to Crisil Ratings.

Krishnan Sitaraman, Chief Ratings Officer, Crisil Ratings said, "Vehicle finance and home loans will see steady growth amid intensifying competition. However, exercising due caution on heightened customer leverage, NBFCs will adopt risk-calibrated growth especially in the micro, medium and small enterprises (MSME) and unsecured loan segments."

Vehicle finance (22% of NBFC AUM) growth would remain steady at 16-17% over this fiscal and the next.

The GST cuts have given a fillip to unit sales across vehicle categories, particularly cars, and this momentum is likely to continue.

Additionally, increasing preference for premium vehicles among buyers and focus on used-vehicle financing will support AUM growth in the segment even though competition with banks remains strong in new vehicles, Crisil said.

In home loans (22% of NBFC AUM), growth is estimated at 12-13% over the two fiscals, down from 14% last fiscal.

While the long-term demand for end-user housing remains strong, growth will be marginally slower due to intense competition especially from public sector banks, in the prime home loan market.

Gold loans dominate rise in retail credit growth: CRIF

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Gold loans grew a whopping 53% in the second quarter of fiscal 2026, on a year-on-year basis supporting the increase in overall consumption credit, according to data from CRIF report, 'How India Lends?' released recently.

Gold loans also dominated about 27% of the ₹2,237.8 crore worth of originations value in retail loans in the quarter ended September 2026. Personal loans were the second fastest in terms of value, growing at about 35.4% in the period, according to data in the report.

Grahaa gets nod for nano satellite launch

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The launch will happen from Alcântara Space Center (CEA) located in Brazil

Grahaa Space, a Bengaluru-based spacetech startup, obtained authorisation from Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) to launch its maiden nano satellite mission called Solaras S2, as technology demonstration by the end of November.

The launch will happen from Alcântara Space Center (CEA) in Brazil through the Hanbit-Nano launch vehicle developed by Korea-based Innospace, according to the company.

"Solaras S2 mission will qualify our nano satellite bus and platform and allow us to assess the performance. It is a focused technical step that confirms our readiness for the next phase," said Ramesh Kumar V, founder and CEO, Grahaa Space. This progress has been possible with the support of TIIC incubation centre at IIST Trivandrum and IN-SPACe.

"The upcoming missions scheduled for early 2026 with Skyroot will qualify the communications module, gather geo spatial data from the optical payload and establish inter-satellite links."

U.S. companies hold the line at climate talks despite Trump



For earth: Negotiators attend a plenary session during the UN Climate Change Conference in Brazil. REUTERS

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
BELEM, BRAZIL

Despite the U.S. government souring on the global climate agenda ahead of the COP30 summit, American companies did not shy away.

A *Reuters* analysis of attendance lists shows there were 60 representatives of Fortune 100 companies at the Brazil event, compared with 50 at last year's in Baku, Azerbaijan. Still others attended pre-conference events in Brazil's finance hub Sao Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro.

Tech firms including Microsoft and Google, energy company Occidental Petroleum, carmaker General Motors and lender Citigroup were among those represented on a provisional U.N. list of attendees of the official summit.

"We've seen no discernible change in the engagement of U.S. companies on climate policy over the course of this year. And that was certainly reflected in attendance levels," said Andrew Wilson, deputy secretary general for policy at the International Chamber of Commerce.

"We are also seeing growing concern across industry about the growing costs of extreme weather events – underscoring the need for effective policy responses."

Executives said they didn't think now was a good time to opt out of the climate conversation, with rising temperatures unleashing ever more threats to factories, supply chains and the bottom line."We're doing it because it's good for the business. It helps create supply security," said PepsiCo Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO) Jim Andrew on the sidelines of the talks.

"We need farmers to be successful, we need them to keep farming," he added, given the company makes the bulk of its revenues from foods including Walkers Crisps and Quaker Oats.

Filling the void

Darren Woods, the boss of top U.S. oil company ExxonMobil was among the U.S. executives, mayors and other sub-national leaders who attended the pre-COP events.

All those players have an important role in the future of climate action, according to Lou Leonard, Inaugural Dean of Clark University's School of Climate, Environment, and Society.

Reduction in emissions

Existing policies from federal and non-federal actors would lead to a 35% reduction in U.S. emissions by 2035, a recent analysis led by the Center for Global Sustainability (CGS) at the University of Maryland showed. Much of that is being driven by companies. "Despite the headlines, the private sector continues to invest in and deploy clean energy," said Gina McCarthy, former administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and now Managing Co-Chair of 'America Is All In', a coalition of non-federal leaders. "Last year, clean energy jobs in the U.S. expanded three times faster than the rest of the nation's workforce."

The two-week-long COP30 conference also included many smaller U.S. companies in sectors set to profit from the world's shift to low-carbon energy, including in carbon markets.

"Being here is about connecting globally," said Brennan Spellacy, chief executive at carbon credits platform Patch. "Most of my meetings here are with English, French, and German sustainability leaders and CSOs."

Crucial role

President Trump has called climate change a hoax. But regardless of the U.S. federal position, regulations are changing across the world to hasten the energy transition even though the final deal at COP30 disappointed some.

"Irrespective of what's coming out of the United States, in terms of rhetoric, the market is moving (and) policymakers are recognising the direction of travel," said Jack Hurd, head of both the World Economic Forum's Earth System Agenda and the Tropical Forest Alliance.

More U.S. companies are also disclosing their climate strategies despite the U.S. dropping plans for a federal rule requiring it, although the quality of plans from companies across the globe remains low, data from disclosure platform CDP showed.

Whether they were at the main event or not, the fact U.S. companies appeared was significant, said Maria Mendiluce, CEO at the We Mean Business Coalition. "The U.S. has a decisive role in global climate, energy and industrial policy, so sub-national leaders, non-state actors and businesses showing up at COP30 matters."

Norway's tax levy on wealth trades millionaires for principle of equality

Norway sees wealthy exodus after tax hike; govt says equality driver; entrepreneurs say it hinders investment; model offers lessons for Italy, France, U.K. , U.S.; Business magazine Kapital's ranking of Norway's 400 richest people shows 105 now live abroad or transferred wealth to relatives who do

NEWS ANALYSIS

Reuters
OSLO

Sitting in his lakeside villain the Swiss city of Lucerne, Borger Borgenhaug misses grandchildren and the smell of the Nordic sea on a clear summer night.

The carpenter turned real-estate tycoon says that is the price he pays to escape Norway's beefed-up wealth tax - an annual levy that has driven hundreds of millionaires abroad while underpinning one of the world's most equal societies.

"The political climate in Norway has become increasingly hostile to business owners," Borgenhaug, who left in 2022, told *Reuters*.

With a wealth tax dating back to 1892 and a culture of openness that allows citizens to view the tax returns of others, Norway has more experience than most in squeezing the rich. Its model offers lessons for countries debating similar moves, from Britain to France and Italy, or even a city like New York.

The takeaway: a wealth tax will scare off some millionaires,but if set broadly enough, revenues can still be worth it.

Exodus of wealthy

The tax was a defining issue in Norway's election in September, which returned the Labour Party to power. The party had raised the levy and tightened exit rules during its previous term. Individuals pay 1% on net wealth between 1.76 million and 20.7 million crowns ($174,000-$2 million) and, since 2022, 1.1% above that. Exactly 6,71,639 people - about 12% of the population- paid in 2023.



Case for equality: A 'Tax the Rich' protest in New York City, U.S. REUTERS (FILE PHOTO)

Debt deductable

Main homes enjoy a 75% discount on assessed value; shares and commercial property get 20%. Assets abroad are included, but debt is deductible.

Leaving Norway triggers an exit tax of 37.8% on unrealised capital gains above 3 million crowns - such as notional gains on shares that have gone up in value but are yet to be sold. Loopholes that allowed emigrants to defer paymentin definitely were closed in 2024.

> The wealth tax makes the overall personal tax system more progressive than income tax alone
>
> **ELLEN REITAN**
> Deputy Finance Minister, Norway

The changes turned a trickle into a stream. Data from conservative think-tank Civita shows 261 residents with assets above 10 million crowns ($,973,000) left in 2022 and 254 in 2023- more than double the typical rate before the hike.

Business magazine Kapital's ranking of Norway's 400 richest people shows 105 now live abroad or have transferred wealth to relatives who do. Some of their pictures hang on a "wall of shame" in the offices of the small, opposition Socialist Left party.

Case for equality

Supporters argue the tax acts as a redistributive backstop in a country that scrapped inheritance tax in 2014 and ranks among the world's wealthiest thanks to oil, shipping and fisheries.

Norway funnels all proceeds from its oil and gas industry into a sovereign wealth fund and caps annual withdrawals at 3%of the fund's value under a self-imposed fiscal rule.

This means it needs to find other sources of revenue.

"The wealth tax makes the overall personal tax system more progressive than income tax alone," Deputy Finance Minister Ellen Reitan told *Reuters*.

Revenue from it has climbed despite the exodus and now sits at 0.6% of GDP – not a trivial sum. For context, Britain's Labour government is hunting for savings of a similar magnitude to help hit its fiscal targets. Research by Norway's statistics office shows entrepreneurs have enough liquidity to pay, and that the burden falls hugely on the richest.

Another study suggests the tax may spur investment in human capital.

Norway remains among the world's most equal countries and ranks high for ease of doing business.

"These findings suggest that the wealth tax does not straightforwardly hinder firm-level investment or employment,"said Robert Iacono, professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

A poll by the Response agency for the daily Aftenposten taken just before September's election showed 39% of Norwegians wanted the wealth tax maintained or raised, while 23% wanted to see a reduction and 28% called for abolition.

Norway's Labour government wants a grand bargain on tax reform over the next two years, inviting all parties to the table. The catch? The wealth tax stays – in some shape or form.

Critics say the model penalises domestic ownership and risks hollowing out Norway's entrepreneurial base.

"The wealth tax system makes it harder for companies to compete with the rest of the world," said Knut-Erik Karlsen, who made his fortune in fish oil supplements and recently moved to Switzerland.

Norway taxes capital gains, unlike Switzerland, and imposes higher levies on labour than the OECD average. Around 40% of emigrants are business owners, according to Princeton researcher Christine Blandhol, who estimates the latest tax changes will cut Norway's output by 1.3% over the long run. Others find the tax hampers firms' performance.

A wealth levy is especially painful for startup founders, who pay on capital long before profits arrive.

Norway has one of Europe's lowest levels of venture capital as a share of GDP - at half that of Sweden's and far behind theU.S., OECD data shows.

Heirs often leave before taking control of shares.

Nexperia chip crisis upends auto supply chain

REUTERS
DONGGUAN, CHINA

A factory next to a weed-ridden lot in China's industrial south has become a global choke point for automotive chips, upending a sector that just a few years ago swore it wouldn't be caught again by supply-chain disruptions. Automakers vowed to strengthen supply lines after COVID-19 snarled semiconductor output in 2020 and a Japanese factory fire aggravated the shortage a year later. But the crisis engulfing Dutch chipmaker Nexperia's plant exposed a blind spot: The industry never envisioned low-tech chips would become a lever for China against the West.

"No one prepared for geopolitical disruption, and they're still not prepared," said Ambrose Conroy, CEO of U.S. firm Seraph Consulting, which advises automakers. The Dutch government took control of Netherlands-based Nexperia in late September, citing concerns its technology could be passed on to Chinese owner Wingtech. Beijing retaliated by halting exports of finished Nexperia chips packaged at the plant in the Pearl River Delta.

The Netherlands last week reversed course from its decision to take control of Nexperia, signalling a potential breakthrough. From its Dongguan factory, Nexperia ships semiconductors used in everything from car brakes to electric windows.

They sell for fractions of a penny each, yet the shortage forced Nissan and Honda to cut production and drove German supplier Bosch to curtail factory working hours.

This account of how the industry scrambled to respond to the unforeseen crisis is based on interviews with a dozen people, including auto executives, suppliers and chip distributors, who described how just-in-time inventory practices and limited supply-chain diversification left automakers vulnerable to geopolitical shock.



Eye of a storm: The logo of China-owned semiconductor company Nexperia is displayed at the chipmaker's German facility. REUTERS

China's dominance

The reporting shows how China's dominance reaches beyond cutting-edge technology and rare earths to mundane-yet-critical components and how Beijing wields that power to paralyse global production. Some details, including the size of Bosch's exposure and companies' struggles with requirements to trade in yuan, haven't previously been reported.

While the Dutch government took control of the headquarters in Nijmegen, the operations in China remained under the control of Nexperia's Chinese parent. "The Dutch thought they had seized Nexperia, but they only took over an office building," said Li Xing, a professor of international relations at the Guangdong Institute for International Strategies, a think tank.

"What this shows is that, even in mid- and low-end segments, they depend on China. If China wants to get a grip on you, it still can. You have no way out."

In a statement, a spokesperson for Wingtech said Nexperia has become an industry leader since being acquired. "The current crisis shows that breaking up international companies harms supply chains and puts key industries at risk," the spokesperson said.

China's Commerce Ministry didn't respond to requests for comment.

A Nexperia spokesperson said the semiconductor industry's global complexity made it hard to foresee the impact of geopolitics.

Case study

Nexperia's chips were seen as so cheap and available that one European automaker didn't normally prepare alternative supplies, said one person at the carmaker. The chips are "very ordinary electronics with low prices," said this person, who like most of those interviewed spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive information.

The Nexperia episode shows that manufacturers' strategic vulnerability stretches beyond high-tech components, said Alfredo Montufar-Helu, a managing director at Ankura Consulting in Beijing.

Bosch didn't initially have sufficient alternatives ready, despite ordering €200 million ($231 million) worth of Nexperia products a year, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

Bosch declined to comment. Nexperia resumed sales to some domestic distributors in late October but required payment in yuan, instead of foreign currencies used previously. The currency change was an apparent bid by the Chinese business to operate more independently of Dutch headquarters, *Reuters* has reported. Ready-to-ship chips piled up at the Dongguan plant because it wasn't able to handle all the yuan transactions, according to two people briefed on the matter. The situation has since eased, they said.

A Wingtech spokesperson said there hadn't been a chip backlog or systems issues with yuan payment, but didn't elaborate.

China allowed some Nexperia exports to resume this month after U.S. President Donald Trump met with China's Xi Jinping in Seoul.

That came just in time for Bosch and suppliers Aumovio, ZF Group and Hella, which were days away from halting some production, according to a person briefed on the matter.

Bosch, Aumovio and ZF declined to comment. A Hella spokesperson said it has maintained supply-chain stability. When *Reuters* visited the Dongguan plant on a recent weekday, some blinds were drawn and trucks came and went from a docking area. Dozens of scooters were parked outside.

Austria's Melecs and Apple supplier JABIL have managed to source chips from Nexperia. Both have used Chinese entities, allowing them to settle in yuan, the two people briefed on the matter said.

A Melecs spokesperson declined to comment. JABIL did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Lesson not learnt

The chip shortage showed automakers hadn't heeded lessons from the previous shock, said Julie Boote, autos analyst at Pelham Smithers Associates in London.

"You would expect them to have several months' worth of supply inventory for chips," she said. "That's what they said after the last crisis."

Nissan Chief Performance Officer Guillaume Cartier said replacing vulnerable supply chains takes time.

"I know what everyone will tell me, 'Ah, but you didn't learn from the past," he told *Reuters* last month. "Yeah, OK. But do you believe you change all your supply in three years?" The Nexperia shortage forced Nissan to cut production of its top-selling Rogue SUV, *Reuters* has reported, and poses a continuing risk for this year.

Conroy, the consultant, advises clients to hold extra inventory of critical components in the region where they're needed. That's a costly change for an industry that relies on "just-in-time" inventory management to minimise costs.

Not all carmakers got whiplashed. Toyota instructs suppliers to stockpile several months' supply of chips as part of the business continuity plan developed after the devastating 2011 Japan earthquake, *Reuters* has reported. A Toyota spokesperson said there were risks that could impact vehicle production and they would continue to monitor developments closely.

Cost of reliance

Another supply speed bump involved how chips are integrated into vehicles. Nexperia semiconductors are widely used in components like power modules, which manage electricity, and are often soldered straight onto the components. That means they can't just be swapped out for another chip, said Nori Chiou, investment director at White Oak Capital Partners.

Any new vehicle component needs to undergo testing that can add months to the process of securing alternative parts, Chiou said. Nexperia's spokesperson said substitution can't be completed "overnight" because parts that seem identical can perform differently in vehicles.

Germany's Hella is considering alternative suppliers for Nexperia's chips but testing and approvals could take up to a year, longer than initially expected, according to one person in the auto-supply industry.

Hella's spokesperson said it was shifting to "already qualified second sources wherever possible" to maintain stable supplies.

Ankura Consulting's Montufar-Helu said preparing for chip choke points will not be easy – or cheap.

"Everyone is going to start talking once again about building resilience, about diversification," he said. "And then they're going to realise how expensive it is."

PORT SUDAN

Sudan's top general rejects 'Quad' ceasefire proposal citing UAE role



AP

Sudan's Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan said on Sunday the truce plan sent by U.S. envoy Massad Boulos on behalf of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates was the "worst yet" and unacceptable. He accused Mr. Boulos of parroting talking points from Abu Dhabi, which has been accused of arming the RSF. AFP

SYDNEY

Australian politician prompts fury with burqa antics in Parliament



REUTERS

A far-right Australian politician sparked outrage on Monday after donning a burqa at the country's Parliament, in a display that other lawmakers slammed as "racist". Pauline Hanson, belonging to the anti-immigration One Nation party, was seeking to introduce a bill in the Senate that would ban full face coverings. AFP

BEIJING

Xi, Trump speak over phone, discuss bilateral ties, Taiwan



ANI

Chinese leader Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump spoke on bilateral cooperation and the issue of Taiwan in a phone call on Monday, Beijing's official media said. Mr. Trump praised "extremely strong" ties in a social media post after the call. He confirmed a visit to China in April and that Mr. Xi will come to Washington in 2026. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Ruling PML-N sweeps by-elections across Pakistan: initial results



AP

The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) swept the by-elections on Sunday, winning 12 out of 13 seats, according to unofficial results. Polls were held for six National Assembly (NA) seats and seven seats in Punjab's Provincial Assembly. All NA seats were in Punjab except one in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. PTI

U.S. and Ukraine working on 'refined' peace framework to end Russia war

Both countries seek to narrow differences over the Trump plan in Geneva talks; the U.S. President's proposal is viewed as tilted in Russia's favour; European officials welcome progress in talks; Kremlin says nothing has been officially conveyed to it

Reuters
KYIV/GENEVA



Unending plight: A Russian drone strike killed four and wounded 17 in Kharkiv, Ukraine on Sunday. AFP

The United States and Ukraine sought on Monday to narrow the gaps in a peace plan to end the war with Russia after agreeing to modify a U.S. proposal that Kyiv and its European allies saw as a Kremlin wish list.

Washington and Kyiv said in a joint statement they had drafted a "refined peace framework" after talks in Geneva on Sunday. Though no specifics were given, the talks received a cautious welcome from some of Ukraine's allies.

European officials said on Monday they were comforted by the outcome of discussions on proposals that they had viewed as tilted in Russia's favour.

"The negotiations were a step forward, but there are still major issues which remain to be resolved," Finnish President Alexander Stubb wrote on social platform X about Sunday's meeting.

Ukraine's delegation to the talks with U.S. officials in Switzerland was returning home on Monday to report back, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

U.S. President Donald Trump hinted at new progress.

"Is it really possible that big progress is being made in Peace Talks between Russia and Ukraine??? Don't believe it until you see it, but something good just may be happening," Mr. Trump wrote on Truth Social.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz welcomed the "interim result" of the talks, saying the U.S. proposal "has now been modified in significant parts." He cautioned, however: "It was possible to clear up some questions, but we also know that there won't be peace in Ukraine overnight."

The U.S. blindsided Kyiv and European countries with a 28-point peace plan last week, giving Ukraine until Thursday to agree to a framework to end Europe's deadliest war since World War II.

After Sunday's talks, no public statement was released on how the revised plan would handle contentious issues such as how to guarantee Ukraine's security against future Russian threats, or how to fund the rebuilding of Ukraine. Mr. Zelenskyy said negotiations were ongoing.

The Kremlin said nothing had officially been conveyed to Russia. "We are, of course, closely monitoring the media reports that have been pouring in from Geneva over the past few days, but we have not yet received anything official," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

'Bring Russia onboard'

Mr. Merz said Moscow must now become engaged in the process.

"The next step must be that Russia must come to the table," he said in Luanda, Angola, where he was attending a summit between African and European Union countries.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said more work needed to be done. "Everybody is absolutely focused on what we need to get out of this, and that is a just and lasting peace."

The Geneva meeting offered some hope for Kyiv. "Diplomacy has been reinvigorated, and that's good. Very good," Mr. Zelenskyy said late on Sunday.

"We all continue working with partners, especially the United States, to look for compromises that will strengthen but not weaken us," Mr. Zelenskyy said via video link from a separate meeting of Ukraine's allies in Sweden.

German Foreign Minister Johannes Wadephul said U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio "made decisive positive contributions to ensuring that this plan can be accepted by both the European and Ukrainian sides."

Mr. Rubio said on Sunday the talks were "very worthwhile" and constituted the most productive day in "a very long time." "I feel very optimistic that we can get something done," Mr. Rubio said.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's second-largest city Kharkiv was hit by what officials said was a massive drone attack that killed four people and wounded 17 on Sunday.

(With inputs from The Associated Press)

Canada plans citizenship rejig; Indian-origin families to benefit from new rules

Press Trust of India
OTTAWA



Bill C-3, an Act to amend the Citizenship Act (2025), has received royal assent.

Canada has moved closer toward modernising citizenship-by-descent law, after a Bill to amend the act received royal assent, in a move that is likely to affect thousands of Indian-origin families.

Bill C-3, an Act to amend the Citizenship Act (2025), has received royal assent.

This represents an important milestone in making the Citizenship Act more inclusive, while maintaining the value of Canadian citizenship, said a news release issued by the Canadian government on Friday.

"Once the new law comes into force, Canadian citizenship will be provided to people born before the Bill comes into force, who would have been citizens if not for the first-generation limit or other outdated rules of past legislation", the news release said.

The first-generation limit to Canadian citizenship by descent was introduced in 2009. It means that a child born or adopted outside Canada is not a Canadian citizen by descent if their Canadian parent was also born or adopted outside Canada.

This limit caused problems for many Indian-origin Canadians whose children were born out of the country, people who know the matter say.

The new law will also allow a Canadian parent born or adopted abroad to pass citizenship on to their child born or adopted outside Canada on or after the date the Bill comes into force, provided they have a substantial connection to Canada, the release said.

"Bill C-3 will fix long-standing issues in our citizenship laws and bring fairness to families with children born or adopted abroad. It will provide citizenship to people who were excluded by previous laws, and it will set clear rules for the future that reflect how modern families live. These changes will strengthen and protect Canadian citizenship," Canada's Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Lena Metlege Diab said.

'Unconstitutional'

On December 19, 2023, the Ontario Superior Court of Justice declared that key parts of the Citizenship Act relating to the first-generation limit to citizenship by descent were unconstitutional.

The Government of Canada did not appeal the ruling, as it agreed the law had unacceptable outcomes for children of Canadians who were born outside the country.

"By updating the Citizenship Act to reflect the global mobility of modern Canadian families, the federal government has made access to citizenship more fair and reasonable," said Don Chapman, Founder of the Lost Canadians.

'Ridiculous lie': Venezuela rejects U.S. labelling of 'Cartel de los Soles' as terror group

Agence France-Presse
CARACAS



The Trump administration alleges that the shadowy group is run by Nicolas Maduro.

Venezuela on Monday rejected a U.S. terrorist designation of an alleged drug cartel as a "ridiculous lie" amid a major American military buildup in Caribbean waters.

The United States has formally designated Cartel de los Soles a foreign terrorist organization, according to a notice posted on the U.S. Treasury Department website on Monday.

"Venezuela categorically, firmly, and absolutely rejects the new and ridiculous lie from the Secretary of the Department of State, Marco Rubio, who designates the alleged Cartel of the Suns as a terrorist organization... to justify an illegitimate and illegal intervention against Venezuela," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

Washington's listing of the "Cartel de los Soles" (Cartel of the Suns) as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO) officially took effect on Monday, opening the door to new forms of U.S. pressure on leftist President Nicolas Maduro.

U.S. President Donald Trump's administration alleges that the shadowy group is run by Mr. Maduro. No evidence has been made public to support the accusation of Mr. Maduro's involvement in the group.

The designation is part of a U.S. campaign against drugs and illegal immigration from Latin America.

'Topple govt.'

The U.S. has deployed the world's largest aircraft carrier and other military forces in Caribbean waters as part of the Trump administration's anti-drugs campaign, but officials in Caracas suspect that the United States is mounting an operation to topple Mr. Maduro, Venezuela's leftist leader.

U.S. forces have killed at least 83 people in air strikes on boats accused of ferrying drugs in international waters since September, according to an *AFP* tally of publicly released figures. But no evidence has been made public that drugs were in the boats.

However, with a major military presence now deployed in the Caribbean, including an aircraft carrier, the FTO designation will give legal cover for more pressure on the Venezuelan authorities.

The Cartel of the Suns is responsible for "terrorist violence throughout our hemisphere," Mr. Rubio said on November 16.

Legality of strikes

The Trump administration has been vague about how far it is willing to go in Venezuela, but the huge military build-up and regular killings of people in small boats have rattled nerves—and prompted concerns in Washington that the U.S. military may be breaking the law.

On Saturday, six airlines announced they were canceling flights to Venezuela due to safety concerns.

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration on Friday urged civilian aircraft in Venezuelan airspace to "exercise caution" due to the "worsening security situation and heightened military activity in or around Venezuela."

Hope afloat



Rebuilding lives: An open-air beachside market where local fishermen land their catch in Mogadishu. Somalia's capital is rising from the ashes of decades of war. Pavements remain scarred by bullet holes and ruined buildings still line many streets, but the city's cacophony is now one of construction, not destruction. For the first time in decades, three million inhabitants are witnessing a building boom. AFP

China criticises Japan's plans to deploy missiles near Taiwan amid souring ties

Agence France-Presse
BEIJING

China slammed on Monday Japan's decision to push ahead with a planned deployment of missiles on an island near Taiwan, escalating a weeks-long diplomatic spat.

Japanese media on Sunday quoted Japan's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi as saying that the planned deployment of the missiles on Yonaguni island, which is close to Taiwan, was on track.

"The deployment can reduce the possibility of an armed attack on Japan," Mr. Koizumi said.

Beijing-Tokyo relations have soured this month, following remarks by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggesting that Tokyo could intervene militarily in any attack on Taiwan.

China's Foreign Ministry said Japan's missile deployment was a "deliberate attempt to create regional tension and provoke military confrontation".

"Coupled with Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's erroneous remarks on Taiwan, this trend is extremely dangerous and warrants high vigilance from neighbouring countries and the international community," Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told reporters on Monday at a regular press briefing.

Israeli military sacks several generals over Oct. 7 attack

Agence France-Presse
JERUSALEM

Israel's military announced the dismissal of three generals and disciplinary actions against several other senior officers over their failure to prevent the October 7 assault by Hamas, the deadliest attack in the country's history resulting in 1,221 deaths.

The move comes two weeks after Israeli military chief Eyal Zamir called for a "systemic investigation" into the failures that led to the onslaught, even as the government stalled on setting up an inquiry panel despite public pressure.

The list of generals fired included three divisional commanders, one of whom was then serving as the military intelligence chief. A military statement released on Sunday said they bore responsibility for the armed forces' failure to prevent the attack launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip in 2023.

It remains to be seen how or if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu might also be pinned with blame for having a role in the inability to prevent the onslaught.

Israel's retaliatory assault on Gaza has killed at least 69,756 people.



Survival struggle: Women fetch water from the parched shores of Kholpetua river in Khulna, Bangladesh. AFP

Rivers of salt: life on Bangladesh's climate frontline

Agence France Presse
KHULNA

On Bangladesh's coast, where mighty Himalayan rivers meet the sea, water defines every rhythm of life, and every struggle.

Rising seas driven by climate change are swallowing low-lying areas, while stronger storms push saltwater further inland, turning wells and lakes brackish, according to government scientists.

For the millions living in the ecologically sensitive deltas of mudflats and mangrove forests, finding clean drinking water has become an escalating challenge.

Cyclone Aila in 2009 was a turning point. Embankments broke and saltwater swept inland, flooding not only homes, but seeping into once-fertile land. The water that once sustained communities became undrinkable, and the land began to crack under layers of salt.

Balancing act

The people of Khulna and Satkhira districts today live in a fragile balancing act between land and sea. Many families live in houses built on bamboo stilts to escape tidal floods. Children bathe in yellow, saline water and grow up in a landscape of constant change, where rivers erode their homes and schools, and displacement has become the norm.

Men migrate for months seeking work. Women and children walk for hours across parched, cracked soil to fetch water from distant ponds, or harvest rainwater, and store it in tanks supplied by charities.

Each household stores a few thousand litres, rationed carefully until the next monsoon arrives. The daily act of collecting and storing water has become a quiet ritual of endurance.

Southeast Asia's rivers, people at risk from toxic mines: study

Over 2,400 mines in the region could be releasing toxins such as cyanide and mercury into water-bodies downstream, says a Stimson Center study; this exposes millions of people living along these rivers to health risks, and even global consumers

Reuters
THAILAND



Wake-up call: Villagers of Tha Ton protest calling for the shutdown of mines upstream and the restoration of water quality in the Kok, Sai, Ruak, Mekong and Salween rivers in Myanmar. REUTERS

For most of her life, 59-year-old farmer Tip Kamlue has irrigated her fields in northern Thailand with the waters of the Kok River, which flows down from neighbouring Myanmar before joining with the Mekong River that cuts through Southeast Asia.

But since April, after authorities warned residents to stop using the Kok's water because of concerns over contamination, Ms. Tip has been using groundwater to grow pumpkins, garlic, sweet corn and okra.

"It's like half of me has died," she said, standing by her fields in Tha Ton subdistrict.

Across mainland Southeast Asia, more than 2,400 mines – many of them illegal and unregulated – could be releasing deadly chemicals such as cyanide and mercury into river water, according to research from the U.S.-based Stimson Center think tank released on Monday.

"The scale is something that's striking to me," said Brian Eyler, senior fellow at Stimson, pointing to scores of tributaries of major rivers, like the Mekong, the Salween and the Irrawaddy that are probably highly contaminated.

The Stimson report marks the first comprehensive study of potentially polluting mines in mainland Southeast Asia. Researchers analysed satellite imagery to identify mining activity including 366 alluvial mining sites, 359 heap leach sites and 77 rare earth mines draining into the Mekong basin.

Most alluvial mining sites are gold mines, though some also extract tin and silver. Heap leach mining sites include those for gold, nickel, copper, and manganese extraction.

The Mekong is Asia's third-largest river and supports the livelihood of more than 70 million people as well as the global export of farm and fisheries products.

"Because so much of the Mekong Basin is essentially ungoverned by national laws and sensible regulations, the basin is unfortunately ripe for this kind of unregulated activity to occur at a high level of intensity and the huge scale that our data reveals," Mr. Eyler said. The toxic chemicals released through unregulated rare earths mining include ammonium sulphate, and sodium cyanide and mercury that are used for two different types of gold mining, according to Stimson researchers.

That exposes not only the millions of people who live along the Mekong in Southeast Asia to health risks, but also consumers elsewhere. "There is not a major supermarket in the U.S. that doesn't have products from the Mekong Basin, including shrimp, rice and fish," Mr. Eyler added.

China-backed mining

The emergence of new China-backed rare earth mines in eastern Myanmar, not far from the mountainous border with Thailand, initially set off concerns among researchers of the danger of downstream pollution along the Kok River, including areas like Tha Ton.

The contamination pattern on samples from the Kok River shows the presence of arsenic – linked to rare earth and gold mining – alongside heavy rare earths like dysprosium and terbium, said Tanapon Phenrat of Thailand Science Research and Innovation, a Thai government research agency.

"It has only been two years since the rise of rare earth and gold mining in Myanmar at the Kok River's source," said Mr. Tanapon, who conducted testing of the waters this year and warns of a sharp rise in contamination levels unless mining is stopped.

Myanmar, which erupted in conflict after the military seized power in 2021, is one of the world's largest producers of heavy rare earths, critical minerals infused into magnets that power the likes of wind turbines, electric vehicles and defence systems.

From mining sites in Myanmar, the raw material is transported for processing to China, which has a near-monopoly over production of these vital magnets, with Beijing deploying rare earths as leverage in its tariff war with the U.S. "In general, Chinese nationals work on these mines as managers and technical experts," he said.

In response to questions, China's Foreign Ministry said it was not aware of the situation.

The Thai government has established three new task forces to coordinate international cooperation, monitor the mines' health impact and secure alternative supplies for communities along the Kok, Sai, Mekong and Salween rivers, said Deputy Prime Minister Suchart Chomklin.

In northern Tha Ton, signs still hang on a bridge over the Kok River, calling for authorities to shut down the rare earths mines upriver, and farmers like Ms. Tip are desperate for an intervention.

"I just want the Kok River to be the way it used to be – where we could eat from it, bathe in it, play in it, and use it for farming," she said.

Hezbollah mourns top leader killed in Israeli strike

Agence France Presse
BEIRUT

Hezbollah will hold a funeral on Monday for its top military chief and other members of the militant group, a day after Israel killed them in a strike on Beirut's southern suburbs.

Haytham Ali Tabatabai is the most senior Hezbollah commander to be killed by Israel since a November 2024 ceasefire sought to end over a year of hostilities between the two sides.

His assassination comes as Israel has escalated its attacks on Lebanon, with the U.S. increasing its pressure on the Lebanese government to disarm Hezbollah. The group called on its supporters to attend the mass funeral for its "great leader" Tabatabai.

Hezbollah said Mr. Tabatabai assumed the role of military leader after the most recent war with Israel, which saw the group suffer heavy losses including the killings of its senior leaders. Israel has repeatedly bombed Lebanon despite the truce, usually saying it is targeting Hezbollah members and infrastructure to stop the group from rearming.

In his condemnation of the Israeli strike on Sunday, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam stressed that "the only way to consolidate stability" is through "extending the authority of the state over all its territory with its own forces, and enabling the Lebanese army to carry out its duties".

'Pak.'s strikes against TTP leaders in Kabul were signal of new doctrine'

Press Trust of India
ISLAMABAD



Collateral damage: A man inspects a damaged house, following cross-border fire from Pakistan's artillery shelling in Kandahar. AFP

Pakistan's retaliatory strikes targeting Tehreek-e-Taliban's top leaders in Kabul last month were a signal of a new doctrine that Islamabad will act if the Afghan Taliban fails to take action against militants carrying out cross-border attacks from Afghanistan, according to a media report.

The deadly strikes in the heart of Kabul was aimed at sending what officials described as an "unmistakable message" to the Afghan Taliban regime that Pakistan would no longer restrict its counter-terrorism responses to its own soil, *The Express Tribune* reported on Monday.

"The Kabul strikes were not a one-off episode," said a senior source. "They were a signal of a new doctrine. If the Taliban fail to act, Pakistan will act." The strike, widely interpreted as Pakistan's most assertive move since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, targeted hideouts and facilitators responsible for orchestrating recent attacks inside Pakistan.

Citing officials familiar with the assessment, the paper said the Kabul operation has had a "psychological impact" on the Afghan Taliban's leadership and security apparatus.

"Since the Kabul strikes, there is a clear element of fear and caution within the Taliban ranks," one official said. The official added that in the immediate aftermath of the recent terrorist attack in Islamabad, Afghan Taliban interlocutors privately reached out to Pakistani authorities with requests to de-escalate and conveyed that they had "no involvement" in the suicide attack outside the judicial complex.

"This was a very unusual move," the official noted. "In previous incidents, they would either dismiss Pakistan's concerns or shift blame towards TTP factions."

Authorities have observed a decline in the number of terrorist attacks following the Kabul strikes, officials said.

"Pakistan will not wait for protracted diplomatic exchanges," an official asserted. "Our red line is simple. If there is another attack, we will act immediately."

Under tearful skies



A man wades through a water-logged area in Kuala Lumpur as continuous rainfall brought daily life to a standstill in parts of Malaysia on Monday. The intense rain and flooding has forced over 15,000 people to move to evacuation centres set up by the government. REUTERS

Ukraine dismayed over amnesty without accountability in U.S.-led peace plan

Associated Press

Mass graves and bullet-scarred churches mark the torment of past Russian occupation in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha, where traumatised residents now face a new anguish: a U.S.-led peace proposal that would offer a blanket post-war amnesty for the perpetrators of atrocities.

For the survivors of Bucha, where hundreds of Ukrainians were killed in 2022, the proposed amnesty is perceived less as a reconciliation than as a source of disillusionment.

It's a feeling being felt in other communities and reflects broader concerns across Ukraine about the implications of absolving Russia, and its troops and officials, of alleged crimes.

The town's Church of Andrew the Apostle stands beside a mass grave where civilians – some shot dead in the street, others showing signs of torture – are buried.

'It's a green light'

Father Andriy Halavin, who leads the parish in the still-damaged church, said any amnesty would legitimise further violence as the war grinds on.

"It's a green light," he said after holding Sunday service. "It means you can keep bombing, keep executing soldiers, all with confidence that nothing will happen."

The mass killings were uncovered when Russian forces withdrew from the area after their failed attempt to seize Kyiv during the full-scale invasion in 2022.

Father Andriy said many perpetrators have already been identified. Justice, he insisted, is not about revenge but about proving that accountability still matters – especially as Ukrainians are being asked to weigh painful trade-offs for peace.

The proposed 28-point peace deal followed secret negotiations by envoys of Russia and U.S. President Donald Trump.

Ukraine would relinquish territory beyond land currently controlled by Moscow, reduce its military, and give up on NATO membership.



Flaring fight: A firefighter tries to douse flames following a Russian drone attack on a neighbourhood in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Sunday. REUTERS

In return, Kyiv would receive international security guarantees and reconstruction assistance.

At Bucha's military cemetery, Vira Katanenko, 66, visited the grave of her son Andrii, who was killed in battle in the Donetsk region last year. For her, the peace plan and the proposed amnesty are unthinkable.

"I can't accept that," she said. "They want forgiveness for all war crimes, including Bucha? That's horrifying. Let them come here – let Trump himself come here. Let him and his family come, see our pain, and maybe then they'll change their minds."

European leaders insist peace talks must include Ukraine and protect its sovereignty.

Fragile future promises

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says the plan represents one of the war's most difficult moments, pledging to work with Washington but to seek changes.

A short drive from Bucha, mourners gathered for the funeral of serviceman Ruslan Zhyhunov, a 41-year-old machine gunner killed in eastern Ukraine.

Uncertainty surrounding the peace plan weighed heavily among relatives and neighbours as they watched the burial in the rain – another reminder, they said, of how fragile any promised future now feels.

"How can you exchange the territory of your ancestors for something? For what?" asked Andrii Honcharuk, a 71-year-old retired territorial defence volunteer, who attended the service dressed in uniform.

"The war will not end soon. We will still be dying for a long time."

NO COMPULSION

I am happy to bat wherever the team wants me: Washington



RITU RAJ KONWAR

Washington Sundar, who played at No. 3 in Kolkata, batted at No. 8 at Guwahati. “I am happy to bat wherever the team wants me to. That way, it’s much more exciting. This is a team game. Many strategies go into the game depending on the conditions and the opposition. It is very tactical at times,” Washington said.

IN HINDSIGHT

‘I would rather get caught on the boundary than get out defending’



RITU RAJ KONWAR

Marco Jansen, who made 93 and took six wickets, said he rued missing a century after chopping the ball onto the stumps while trying to guide the ball in the slip region. “I’ve never been in the 90s in First Class cricket, so I was nervous. The next time I’d rather get caught on the boundary than defending or trying to push for a one”.

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

India women clinch second straight Kabaddi World Cup



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The Indian women’s kabaddi team on Monday secured its second consecutive World Cup title with a 35-28 win over Taiwan in Dhaka. India emerged on top in a tournament involving 11 countries. India had beaten Iran 33-21 to enter the summit clash. Taiwan, on the other hand, defeated hosts Bangladesh 25-18 in the semifinals.

INSPIRATIONAL

PM Modi hails the Indian blind women’s team’s T20 WC triumph



AFP

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday congratulated the Indian cricket team which won the T20 Blind Women’s World Cup. “Congratulations to the Indian Blind women’s team for creating history! This is a shining example of hard work and determination. This feat will inspire generations to come,” he posted on *X*.

Pedestrian India implodes as Jansen breathes fire

The left-arm pacer’s six-wicket haul helps the Proteas bowl out the host for 201; Washington and Kuldeep battle it out but South Africa holds the upper hand; Bavuma doesn’t enforce the follow-on

SA IN INDIA

S. Dipak Ragav
GUWAHATI

Kuldeep Yadav, on day two, called the pitch at the ACA stadium a “road” after South Africa amassed 489. A day later, though, India’s batters made the 22-yard strip look far more menacing than it actually was.

A 45-minute passage of play on either side of the tea interval on the morning of day three on Monday pushed India into an abyss as South Africa tightened its vice-like grip on the second and final Test.

For the second day in succession, it was Marco Jansen who starred for the visitors, scalping six wickets (19.5-5-48-6) to help bowl out India for 201.

Despite a healthy 288-run lead, Temba Bavuma did not enforce the follow-on. South Africa went to stumps on 26 for no loss in its second essay and is ahead by 314.

Double act

Jansen, whose quickfire 93 in the first innings swelled the Proteas’ total, made full use of his height to bounce out the Indian batters.

Resuming at nine for no loss, the home team needed to mix caution and aggression to secure a positive outcome in this fixture and level the series. Instead, India imploded, losing six wickets for 27 runs in 11.1 overs, going from 95 for one to 122 for seven.

The hosts, though, started positively with openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and K.L. Rahul adding 65 in quick time. Jaiswal wasted no time in attacking the spinners and brought out the sweep, collecting two boundaries and a six en route his half-century.

Just as India was motoring along at nearly four an over, Keshav Maharaj got one to spin and jump to hit the shoulder of Rahul’s bat, with Aiden Markram grabbing an easy one at slip – the first of his five catches.

The South African tweakers were slower through the air and found more purchase than their Indian counterparts, with the turn and bounce keeping the batters guessing.



Lettin’ it rip: Jansen troubled the Indian batters with his bounce. RITU RAJ KONWAR

SCOREBOARD

SOUTH AFRICA — 1ST INNINGS
489 in 151.1 overs.

INDIA — 1ST INNINGS
Yashasvi Jaiswal c Jansen b Harmer 58 *(97b, 7x4, 1x6)*, K.L. Rahul c Markram b Maharaj 22 *(63b, 2x4)*, B. Sai Sudharsan c Rickelton b Harmer 15 *(40b, 2x4)*, Dhruv Jurel c Maharaj b Jansen 0 *(11b)*, Rishabh Pant c Verreynne b Jansen 7 *(8b, 1x6)*, Ravindra Jadeja c Markram b Jansen 6 *(18b)*, Nitish Kumar c Markram b Jansen 10 *(18b, 1x4)*, Washington Sundar c Markram b Harmer 48 *(92b, 2x4, 1x6)*, Kuldeep Yadav c Markram b Jansen 19 *(134b, 3x4)*, Jasprit Bumrah c Verreynne b Jansen 5 *(17b, 1x4)*, Mohammed Siraj (not out) 2 *(6b)*; Extras (lb-8, nb-1): 9; Total (in 83.5 overs): 201.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-65 (Rahul, 21.3 overs), 2-95 (Jaiswal, 32.2), 3-96 (Sai Sudharsan, 34.3), 4-102 (Jurel, 35.3), 5-105 (Pant, 37.2), 6-119 (Nitish, 41.4), 7-122 (Jadeja, 43.3), 8-194 (Washington, 78.1), 9-194 (Kuldeep, 81.5).

SOUTH AFRICA BOWLING
Jansen 19.5-5-48-6, Mulder 10-5-14-0, Maharaj 15-1-39-1, Harmer 27-6-64-3, Markram 10-1-26-0, Muthusamy 2-0-2-0.

SOUTH AFRICA — 2ND INNINGS
Ryan Rickelton (batting) 13 *(25b, 1x4)*, Aiden Markram (batting) 12 *(23b, 2x4)*; Extras (b-1): 1; Total (for no loss in eight overs): 26.

INDIA BOWLING
Bumrah 3-0-13-0, Siraj 3-1-8-0, Jadeja 1-0-2-0, Kuldeep 1-0-2-0.

Around 20 minutes before tea, Simon Harmer got into action. Jaiswal, batting well on 58, was surprised by a delivery from the off-spinner that bounced a tad more and found the leading edge. Jansen completed a good catch diving forward.

Flurry of wickets

B. Sai Sudharsan, back at No. 3, failed to capitalise on the opportunity, pulling a long-hop from Harmer to short-midwicket.

In the last over before the break, Dhruv Jurel inexplicably tried to pull Jansen from outside off-stump and was snapped up at mid-on.

Having lost three wickets in 20 balls, India needed to be a bit watchful, but skipper Rishabh Pant charged down to Jansen and nicked it behind while attempting a wild heave.

The left-arm pacer then removed Nitish Kumar and Ravindra Jadeja in consecutive overs, both caught in the cordon trying to fend well-directed short-pitched deliveries.

By the time the lanky left-armer finished his second spell (8-1-18-4), India was in dire straits. From there, Washington Sundar (48) and Kuldeep Yadav forged a 72-run alliance for the eighth wicket. Washington, pushed down to No. 8 from No. 3, gave a good account of his strong technique yet again, handling the spinners with aplomb using his long reach. Kuldeep, too, looked assured, and the duo showed great application while stitching a vital partnership.

But in the final session, Jansen closed out the innings after taking the second new ball and finished with a well-deserved five-for, the fourth of his career.



The slide continues: Pant fell cheaply, becoming Jansen’s second victim. RITU RAJ KONWAR

Today was one of those days when everything clicked, says Jansen

S. Dipak Ragav
GUWAHATI

At 6’8’’, South Africa’s Marco Jansen is a towering figure. On Monday, he stood tall for his country, finishing with a rousing six-wicket haul on day three of the second Test here.

Height an advantage

His high-arm release and the ability to generate awkward bounce from a slightly fuller length leaves batters suffocating as India found out.

The 25-year-old put the bouncer to good use, which gave him four of his six wickets.

Going with the flow

“To be honest, we just said we’re going to try. It wasn’t nipping as much as in Kolkata and wasn’t squatting as well. We had to figure out a plan, and I think when I got my first wicket with a bouncer, we said: ‘let’s see how long this is going to work for,’ and yeah, it just came off,” said Jansen.

The left-arm pacer was also pleased to have finally found success in India, which he felt had been a difficult place for him in the past.

“I have always struggled bowling in India, whether it was white ball or red ball.

“I am jealous of people who are short and can get the ball to squat and nip back. Since I’m so tall, for me it goes over the stumps,” he added.

Extract more

“At the same time, when there’s a wicket with a bit of pace and bounce, then I get to extract more out of it.

“I have tried to learn what’s going to work for me and help me perform to the best of my ability. Today was just one of those days I got the pace and the bounce out of the wicket... everything clicked. As a player, you take those days and run with it”.

It was a good wicket... there were runs to be made, says Washington

S. Dipak Ragav
GUWAHATI

With the series on the line, India finds itself in deep trouble after another disappointing batting performance against South Africa here on Monday. Having been bowled out for 201, all-rounder Washington Sundar admitted there were no demons in the pitch and felt there were runs to be made.

“It was a very good wicket and a true wicket. You don’t often get to bat on such tracks, especially in India. If you spend time, there are runs to be made,” said Washington, who was the second-highest scorer (48).

Batters like Dhruv Jurel and Rishabh Pant perished to expansive shots when the situation needed a calmer approach. When asked if there were prior plans to be aggressive and score at a brisk pace, Washington said there were no such targets.

“If we were in a scenario where we had lost only four to five wickets today, then we could have planned for tomorrow as we bat quite deep. I don’t think there were any plans as to how much we needed to get today,” he said.

But the 26-year-old defended the shot selection of the batters. “On another day, both [Pant and Jurel’s] shots would have gone into the stands, and we would have appreciated and clapped. That’s how it is”.

Wei, Sindarov settle for a 50-move draw

CHESS WORLD CUP

P.K. Ajith Kumar
ARPORA (GOA)

It was perhaps only fitting that Abhinav Bindra made the ceremonial opening move at the Chess World Cup on Monday. Like chess, shooting too is a lonely sport.

It was the first game of the final of what is one of the biggest events in the mind game’s calendar, and India’s first-ever individual gold medallist at the Olympics made the first move for Javokhir Sindarov, taking the ‘e’ pawn two squares forward at Resort Rio.

A little earlier, while talking to reporters, the articulate Bindra had said that he was more of a follower of chess players and than the game itself. For the game’s followers, who are growing in numbers rapidly in India, there may not have been too much excitement in the final’s first encounter.

But it had its moments before Wei and Sindarov decided to split the point after 50 moves; the opposite-coloured bishop ending.

This was the first time ever that Wei and Sindarov were coming face to face in the classical format. The Chinese, not for the first time here, opted for Petrov’s Defence, and managed to create a promising position, but he didn’t really press, as he opted to capture the knight instead of a pawn, taking which would have given him more to play for.

Stalemate: Sindarov and Wei chose to play it safe. FIDE

The stakes are high in the other match, too. And Andrey Esipenko, after making that terrible blunder against Wei that cost him a place in the Candidates, should be feeling better.

The Russian beat Nodirbek Yakubboev to take a 1-0 lead in the third-place playoff.

This time, playing from the white side of a Sicilian Defence (Four Knights), he was the beneficiary of some weak moves under time pressure from his opponent, in a rook-and-minor-piece ending. The Uzbek resigned on the 38th move, when he was about to lose his knight.

The results:

Final: Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb) drew with Wei Yi (Chn).
Third-place playoff: Andrey Esipenko (Rus) bt Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb).

Next decade will be for sports in India: Bindra

P.K. Ajith Kumar
ARPORA (GOA)

He ended a country’s embarrassingly long wait in 2008. Abhinav Bindra, who won India’s first individual gold medal at the Beijing Olympics, believes the world’s biggest Games have to come to India one day.

“I think there is no doubt that the Olympic Games will come to India,” said Bindra, who was here to make the ceremonial opening move of the Chess World Cup final. “I think it is only a matter of time. The Games will eventually come.”

“It is a good thing that we are bidding [for the 2036 Olympics] and we are going into that journey,” he said.

“I think there are double-digit countries that are currently interested in hosting the Games. Most bids will fail.”

The former shooter feels it is important that India uses the bid well. “If we win, fantastic, but even if we don’t get it, sport must win and must go forward,” he said.

“We are already seeing signs of that happening, like the sports governance bill. There is a little bit more sense of purpose which we are seeing all around.” He is hopeful of India’s future in sport. “I believe that the next decade will also be a decade for sport in this country,” he said.

“Sport will develop more. We are seeing that our youth, which is such a large demographic, the consumption, whether people are just watching as spectators or actively participating in it, that number is rising.”



Sowing the seeds: Bindra believes that when schools provide opportunities, participation in elite sports will increase. FIDE

> I think there is no doubt that the Olympic Games will come to India. I think it is only a matter of time. The Games will eventually come

Bindra said more people should play.

“When children get more opportunities in schools, to experience playing, just not to become some champion or Olympic gold medallist, just the experience of sport is needed to become healthier, and imbibe values,” he said.

“When these opportunities increase, automatically the by-product, that is, participation in elite sports will also increase”.

INBRIEF



Pranjali claims 25m pistol gold, her third medal

India's Pranjali Prashant Dhumal clinched gold in the women's 25m pistol, her third medal, in the Deaflympics in Tokyo on Monday. Mosina Halyna of Ukraine won silver and Jeon Jiwon of Korea took bronze. Anuya Prasad was fourth.

Double delight for maestro Messi and Inter Miami

Lionel Messi added yet another chapter to his legendary career as the Argentine maestro became the first footballer in history to record 1300 goal contributions. Messi has now amassed 896 goals and 404 assists across club and international football, a staggering achievement. The landmark came when Messi powered Inter Miami to its first-ever Major League Soccer (MLS) Cup final with a 4-0 win over FC Cincinnati.

Ansh, Shaina reign supreme at junior National badminton

Ansh Negi and Shaina Manimuthu emerged the boys' and girls' singles champions at the Yonex Sunrise 48th junior National badminton, which concluded in Itanagar on Monday.

The results: Singles: Boys: Ansh Negi bt Suryaksh Rawat 18-21, 22-20, 21-11; **Girls:** Shaina Manimuthu bt Tanoo Chandra 17-21, 22-20, 21-13; **Doubles: Boys:** A.R. Sumith & C. Lalramsanga bt Bhargav Ram & Viswa Tej Gobburu 21-13, 21-12; **Girls:** K. Vennala & U. Reshika 21-16, 21-9; **Mixed doubles:** Vansh Dev & Angel Punera bt Bhavya Chhabra & Vishakha Toppo 22-20, 21-19.



TGF to conduct a nationwide EWS golf Talent Hunt

The Golf Foundation (TGF) will conduct the third edition of its nationwide EWS (Economically Weaker Section) Talent Hunt 2025-26, a grassroots golf-identification initiative that covers children belonging to families whose income is less than ₹8 lakh per annum. TGF will hold on-range talent identification camps in 36 cities across India. Across range, school programmes, TGF aims to screen 1,500 to 1,800 children. Those shortlisted will join twice-a-week training sessions at regional golf facilities until the first week of January 2026 before the final selection round. The 30-odd shortlisted finalists will enter TGF's long-term pathway, where ₹3.5 lakh to ₹5lakh will be allocated per kid per annum.

Champions League schedule

Ajax vs Benfica; Galatasaray vs Union St.-Gilloise (*both matches at 11.15 p.m. on Tuesday).*
Bodo/Glimt vs Juventus; Dortmund vs Villarreal; Chelsea vs Barcelona; Manchester City vs Bayer Leverkusen; Marseille vs Newcastle United; Napoli vs FK Qarabag; Slavia Prague vs Athletic Club. *(all matches at 1.30 a.m. on Wednesday).*

Cobolli's comeback win leads Italy to a three-peat

He defeats Munar in a thrilling match to secure an unassailable lead after Berrettini gets the better of Busta; the host makes light of the absence of World No. 1 Sinner and Musetti

DAVIS CUP

Agence France-Presse
BOLOGNA



Cup of joy: The Italian team rose to the occasion to quell the Spanish challenge in the finale. AFP

Italy claimed a third Davis Cup in as many years on Sunday after beating Spain 2-0 in front of delighted home fans in Bologna.

Flavio Cobolli sparked loud celebrations by coming back from a set down to beat Jaume Munar 1-6, 7-6 (5), 7-5 and ensure that Italy retained the title.

Matteo Berrettini had earlier cruised to a 6-3, 6-4 win over Pablo Carreno Busta, setting Filippo Volandri's team up for victory without the doubles match needing to be played.

"This was my dream, we're a really united team, and we tried to recreate the spirit of the Italy team that won the (football) World Cup in 2006," said Cobolli.

"I'm really proud of everyone and our brilliant fans are also part of this team. I've been repeating for three days but it's the best day of my life."

Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori haven't been employed in a doubles contest in northern Italy as the hosts won the Davis Cup without losing a match.

It's an impressive feat by Italy who competed without their two highest-ranked players in superstar Jannik Sinner and Lorenzo Musetti.

Both players sit in the top 10 of the men's world rankings and were major absences for the tournament, especially as they chose not to take part in the title defence on home soil.

"It doesn't matter who goes out there for us, we have a deep squad and we have a lot of great lads who play great tennis," said Berrettini.

Spain too were missing their top player in world number one Carlos Alcaraz, but the six-time Grand Slam winner would have played had he not suffered a hamstring injury during his ATP Finals showdown with Sinner a week ago.

> This was my dream, we're a really united team, and we tried to recreate the spirit of the Italy team that won the (football) World Cup in 2006
> – COBOLLI

Earlier on Sunday, the head of the International Tennis Federation insisted that top players were not snubbing the competition.

"There's this false feeling out there that top players don't represent their nation.

"That's not true," David Haggerty told reporters ahead of the final.

"Some of those top players that played in the qualifier round or the second qualifier round didn't make it to the finals. And so we had many top players that have played."

American Taylor Fritz, Australian Alex de Minaur, Dane Holger Rune and Norwegian Casper Ruud -- all in the top 20 of the men's rankings -- featured in the early rounds of the competition without managing to reach the finals with their respective nations.

The results:

Italy bt Spain 2-0 (Matteo Berrettini bt Pablo Carreno Busta 6-3, 6-4; Flavio Cobolli bt Jaume Munar 1-6, 7-6(5), 7-5).



Veteran: Prannoy, who has been battling injuries, will still be the top-ranked Indian in the fray. FILE PHOTO: SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

India's next-generation hopes to shine at Syed Modi badminton

Uthra Ganesan
LUCKNOW

K. Srikanth and H.S. Prannoy will be hoping to turn around their fortunes and end the season on a high when the Syed Modi India International 2025 begins here on Tuesday, even as the next crop of Indian shuttlers will be looking to prove themselves and earn crucial ranking points.

With no top-20 player and only a smattering of foreign entries, the BWF Super 300 tournament, with an enhanced prize purse of $240,000, has seen a spate of withdrawals, including that of Dane Viktor Axelsen and Malaysia's Sholeh Aidil, defending champion and recently crowned Australian Open winner Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty among the men and P.V. Sindhu among the women.

Prannoy, who has been battling injuries and health concerns, has not managed to go beyond the second round in 15 outings in 2025 but will still be the top-ranked Indian in the fray. Srikanth has fared better, reaching the final of the Malaysia Masters in May but failing to capitalise on that momentum since then.

Prannoy last played here in 2019 while Srikanth has won twice, both wins coming in the tournament's previous avatar as a Grand Prix Gold event. The spotlight, however, will be on the likes of Kiran George, Priyanshu Rajawat, Meiraba Maisnam and Mithun Manjunath. Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh, with a couple of Super 300 titles this year, will be looking to add another as the top seed.

Among the women, former world champion Nozomi Okuhara is on a comeback trail and will be hoping to end the season on a high, while the Indian hopes rest on the likes of Tanvi Sharma, Anmol Kharb and Unnati Hooda.

In women's doubles, the pair of Gayatri Gopichand and Treesa Jolly is back to defend its title, the top-seeded Indian pair looking to win its first World Tour title this year after a series of early exits.

Medvedev, Bopanna to team up for WTL's India debut

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU



Medvedev and Bopanna. AFP & FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

World No. 13 and 2021 US Open champion Daniil Medvedev headlines the player field for the World Tennis League (WTL) exhibition tennis tournament set to be held in Bengaluru from December 17-20.

On Monday, the League unveiled the team compositions, and players like Denis Shapovalov (Canada), Ukraine's Elina Svitolina, Aussie Nick Kyrgios, Frenchman Gael Monfils and Spain's Paula Badosa are set to feature.

Missing from the roster that was earlier announced is Elina Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, who won the season-ending WTA Finals earlier this month in Riyadh.

The teams: Game Changers Falcons: Daniil Medvedev, Rohan Bopanna, Magda Linette, Sahaja Yamalapalli; **VB Realty Hawks:** Denis Shapovalov, Yuki Bhambri, Elina Svitolina, Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi. **Aussie Mavericks Kites:** Nick Kyrgios, Dhakshineshwar Suresh, Marta Kostyuk, Ankita Raina. **AOS Eagles:** Gael Monfils, Sumit Nagal, Paula Badosa, Shrivalli Bhamidipaty.

How shotstoppers Princedeep and Bikramjit inspire each other

HOCKEY

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Princedeep Singh and Bikramjit Singh are two confident young goalkeepers eager to showcase their talent and help India go the distance in the FIH junior men's World Cup beginning on November 28 in Chennai and Madurai. India last won the title in 2016 in Lucknow.

In the last two editions in 2021 and 2023, India finished a disappointing fourth.

The competition, this time around too, will be tough with Australia, seven-time champion Germany and the Netherlands among others vying for the honours.



Bikramjit, and Princedeep. K. KEERTHIVASAN

Under head coach and former India 'keeper P.R. Sreejesh, who has been a pillar of strength for the Indian senior team, the two 21-year-olds have been learning a lot.

Princedeep and Bikramjit said Sreejesh breaks down the basics of goalkeeping so well, and that they have benefitted a lot from his style.

"He (Sreejesh) tells us about our mistakes in detail. He knows how much pressure there is on the goalkeeper.

Sreejesh factor

"He has brought a lot of changes in technique in the way we position ourselves and save the aerial shots and ground shots," they said.

Though Princedeep and Bikramjit are fierce competitors, they share a professional bond, having been together in the Indian junior team for two previous tournaments: the 2025 Sultan of Johor Cup (where India bagged a silver) and the 2024 junior Asia Cup (where India won the gold). "We are roommates here. For us, the team comes first. We talk about each other's mistakes, and it's been really helpful," they said.

Bikramjit was noticed after his wonderful performance in the 2024-25 Hockey India League (HIL) where he was adjudged the best goalkeeper of the tournament, playing for Hyderabad Toofans.

Handling pressure

"It was great. Playing in HIL taught us how to handle the pressure," he said. For Princedeep, being part of the Tamil Nadu Dragons in HIL and learning from teammate and legendary Ireland goalkeeper David Harte was once in a lifetime experience.

Now, they want the junior World Cup to be in India. "We have to win and keep the trophy," Princedeep and Bikramjit said.

AIFF adopts constitution as per SC order

Sports Bureau
KOLKATA

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) formally adopted the contentious Article 25.3 (c) and (d) of its Constitution as approved by the Supreme Court of India, with an overwhelming majority in a Special General Meeting organised for the purpose on Monday.

According to Article, an office bearer in the executive committee of the AIFF cannot hold a position as an office bearer in a member/State association. In the previous meeting held on October 12, the AIFF left adopted the constitution without the two clauses, a decision on which was pending in the Supreme Court. The SGM on Monday saw an attendance of 27 member associations, out of which 24 voted for the adoption of the clauses. Two associations - the Indian Football Association (Bengal) and the Goa FA - suggested a review petition in the apex court to reconsider the decision. The Football Association of Odisha has asked for a week's time to deliberate on the issue internally.

"With this, what began in 2017 (when the hearing for the new constitution started in the SC) has finally ended. I am relieved that AIFF has a constitution that fulfils all the requirements of the honourable Supreme Court, FIFA and the AFC," said the AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey.

Madrid escapes with a draw; AC Milan gets bragging rights over rival Inter

EURO LEAGUES

Agence France-Presse
ELCHE



Saving face: Bellingham's late goal helped Madrid get a point at Elche. AFP

Jude Bellingham struck late on to secure Real Madrid a 2-2 draw at Elche on Sunday, taking his team top of LaLiga by a point.

Xabi Alonso's side struggled against its mid-table opponent in an entertaining battle in which Madrid twice came from behind.

Aleix Febas fired the host ahead before Dean Huijsen levelled for the league leader, with Bellingham stabbing home from close range after Alvaro Rodriguez blasted Elche back in front. The result moved Madrid one point ahead of Barcelona, which routed Athletic Bilbao 4-0 on Saturday in its return to the renovated Camp Nou Stadium.

In Serie A, Christian Pulisic scored in his first start for more than a month, and Mike Maignan saved a penalty as AC Milan beat Inter Milan 1-0 in a thrilling derby. Milan's win prevented its city rival from going joint top of Serie A.

That left Roma as the sole leader after Gian Piero Gasperini's side won 3-1 at Cremonese earlier.

Roma has 27 points, two more than Milan and Napoli and three more than Inter and Bologna.

Eberechi Eze hailed his "special" moment as the Arsenal star's first-ever hattrick inspired a 4-1 rout of north London rival Tottenham. "That's a good one, man. Enjoyable day. Happy to help the team, and to win today was special," Eze said. "It is special. Words can't explain this one today."

Top results: LaLiga: Getafe 0 lost to Atletico 1 (Duarte 82-og); Elche 2 (Febas 53, Rodriguez 84) drew with Real Madrid 2 (Huijsen 78, Bellingham 87).
Serie A: Inter Milan 0 lost to AC Milan 1 (Pulisic 54); Lazio 2 (Guendouzi 29, Noslin 90+6) bt Lecce 0.

India and Argentina share honours in practice matches

Sports Bureau
CHENNAI

India and Argentina shared the honours (1-1) in the three practice matches at the SDAT-Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here, ahead of the FIH junior men's hockey World Cup from November 28.

The two teams drew the first match 1-1 while India won the second 5-3.

Argentina won the third 2-1.

Though the practice matches were considered friendly ones, Argentina and India played fiercely.

India head coach P.R. Sreejesh said on Sunday: "We tried several formations and combinations, playing full-court pass and half-court press. Argentina is one of the teams that plays skillful hockey.

"But we played well. We need to sort out our short passes, long passes and aerial balls. We need to be prepared."

Juan Ignacio Gilardi, Argentina head coach, was happy with his wards' performance.

Tired

"We were a bit tired in the first match due to jet lag. The second was our worst.

"We need to get used to the pitch which is fast. Nevertheless, it was good match preparation."

Washington and the whirlwind rollercoaster

The left-hander has batted at five different slots in his last seven Test innings, despite which he has scored 297 runs at 59.4. He has batted with batters, he has batted with all-rounders, he has batted with bowlers and sometimes, like in the Delhi Test against WI, he hasn't batted at all



RITU RAJ KONWAR

R. Kaushik
GUWAHATI

Being the ultimate, quintessential team man isn't always a virtue. Ask Rahul Dravid. Or V.V.S. Laxman. Or K.L. Rahul. Or Washington Sundar now, more than anyone else.

Not that any one of this quartet will admit so in public, of course. That too is the lot of the team man.

Dravid was the original crisis man of Indian cricket. Need a Test opener? 'Rahul's the guy.' Need someone to keep wickets in 50-overs cricket to add depth and stability and balance leading into a World Cup? 'Ermm Rahul, can you do the job?' Rahul *could* do it, needless to say. And do it very well, too. He didn't *like* doing it, but he didn't complain, he didn't bemoan his fate. He just got down to business, in typical no-fuss fashion.

Like his batting partner in that epochal stand at Eden Gardens against Australia in 2001. Laxman had never opened the batting in any grade of cricket, at any level, then he was thrust up the order in his third Test series, in West Indies in 1997. He made a half-century in his first appearance, backed it up with a couple of more solid knocks and produced a blazing, other-worldly 167 in Sydney in January 2000 but just one Test failure later, he was jettisoned as a 'makeshift' opener - never mind who made him that.

To his credit, Laxman bounced back in stellar fashion to end up with an excellent, delightfully entertaining Test career, but that was despite the system, not because of it.

Multiple roles

Following in his fellow Bengalurean's footsteps, Rahul too has been employed in multiple roles because of his 'versatility'. He began his Test career at No. 6 - where he had never batted previously - in Melbourne in 2014 before moving up to No. 3 in the second innings and to the opener's slot in the next game in Sydney, where he produced his maiden century. For the next decade, he batted in various positions. He became a white-ball wicketkeeper - he still holds that role in the 50-over format - and was even the designated Test stumper for two matches in South Africa in 2023-24. Just about the only thing Rahul hasn't done, yet, is keep wicket to his own bowling.

Which brings us to Washington, an accidental Test debutant in January 2021 because India were struggling to put 11 fit men on the park for the deciding Test against Australia in Brisbane. More than half the team that started the series in Adelaide was unavailable for the fourth Test at the Gabba - skipper Virat Kohli had returned home on paternity leave while Mohammed Shami, Ravindra Jadeja, R. Ashwin, Hanuma Vihari and Jasprit Bumrah had all picked up tour-ending injuries.

Washington wasn't in the original Test party, travelling with the extended squad as a 'net bowler', until he had to perforce be pressed into service at the Gabba. He had a Test to remember, both for the fact that he was part of the group that created history by consigning Australia to their first loss at the Gabbatoir in more than three decades and that he played a significant hand in the three-wicket series-clinching victory.

In the first innings with India well behind the eight-ball, he made a flowing 62 in a century stand with Shardul Thakur, then produced a crucial 22 in a tense run-chase while displaying nerves of steel. He played in three of India's next four Tests, at home against England in February-March 2021, with unbeaten efforts of 85 and 96 bookending two ducks, but was then put out to pasture for the next three and a half years for no discernible reason.

He was still a bit player in white-ball internationals, and when he did return to the Test fold, it was under interesting - for want of a better word - circumstances. Having finally earned a top-order berth in the Tamil Nadu team, the left-hander made 152 against Delhi in October last year, immediately after which he was drafted into the Test side for the second game of a three-match series against New Zealand. Interesting why? Because he was picked primarily as an off-spinner to counter the plethora of Kiwi left-handers.

Washington responded with 11 wickets for the game and scored 18 not out and 21 from Nos. 9 and 6 respectively. Welcome back, Washy. Strap in for a whirlwind rollercoaster. And don't even think about starting to feel comfortable, because we have so many plans for you. So, so many.

He was sometimes a batter who could bowl competent off-break, at others an off-spinner who could produce mellifluous runs down the order. In his first 21 Test innings, he batted at No. 6 once, at No. 7 six times, at No. 8 11 times and at No. 9 thrice. In that phase, he had four half-centuries and four other scores of more than 25. Then came the second innings of the fourth Test at Old Trafford in July and a fresh challenge.



Washington... the Gabba flashback. FILE PHOTO

Rishabh Pant had broken his right foot in the first innings after inside-edging a Chris Woakes reverse sweep. After retiring hurt, he did come back the next day to complete a brave half-century but by the time of the second innings, he could barely put any weight on the foot; he'd only bat if needed. Trailing by 311 after the first innings and with more than five sessions to bat out, India were rocked by Woakes, losing their first two wickets without a run on the board. Rahul and skipper Shubman Gill put on 188 for the third wicket when the former was dismissed some 40 minutes into the final day's play.

At 188 for three, India had their work cut out. They also needed a new No. 5. So out came Washington, tall and poised and unflappable, compact and assured and technically near perfect.

For five hours, he hardly put a foot wrong. He never lapsed in concentration, he tried nothing fancy. He didn't even so much as look at the scoreboard. He lost his captain just before lunch and should have lost Ravindra Jadeja too, first ball, had Joe Root at first slip not put down a regulation offering. After that let-off, Jadeja also put his head down. The two left-handers first frustrated and then drove England ragged, both bringing up respective centuries and securing an honourable draw as the hosts allowed their emotions to get the better of them during an ugly final passage when they behaved with petulance and lack of grace.

That unbeaten 101 ought to have been the clincher. Instead, in the next Test at the Oval, Washington batted at No. 8 in the final innings and No. 9 in the second (because Akash Deep came in as a nightwatchman), when he scored a pivotal 53 in a series-squaring seven-run heist. His next four innings have been at No. 7 (nine not out), No. 3 (29), No. 3 (31) and now No. 8 in the first innings of the Guwahati Test against South Africa, when he made an attractive, impeccable 48.

What all of this means is that in his last seven Test innings, Washington has batted at five different slots, despite which he has scored 297 runs at 59.4. He has batted with batters, he has batted with all-rounders, he has batted with bowlers and sometimes, like in the Delhi Test against West Indies, he hasn't batted at all. Maybe the think-tank, in its collective wisdom, is convinced that the best way of getting the best out of Washington the batter is to keep him guessing and to recalibrate his 'entry point' each time so that he is presented with a fresh and exciting challenge innings after innings. If that is the case, then clearly, it is working.

Different mindset

To most people, it is natural to feel unsettled while being yo-yoed up and down a Test batting order at the drop of a hat, but Washington chooses to look at it differently. "Honestly, I really want to be the cricketer who steps up whenever the team requires and wherever the team wants me to bat and bowl. I have got to be ready and get things done for the team," he said on Monday. "That is the kind of mindset I am in. No matter what situation I am in, it is very exciting for me. That way, I also get to play different roles. I don't think many get that opportunity, so it is only exciting."

Maybe the 26-year-old is being politically correct, but what other choice does he have? Even if he has good reason to do so, can he question why he hasn't been eased off the No. 3 position despite playing out 174 deliveries in Kolkata where no one else in the Indian camp apart from Rahul (125) faced even 75? He can wonder, but whom can he ask why Nitish Kumar, despite his right-handedness in a left-heavy line-up, is occupying a slot above him despite the Andhra lad's modest recent returns which are in stark contrast with Washington's unquestioned consistency? If Washington has admirably chosen to go with the flow and not quibble like he is entitled to, then more power to him because wallowing in self-pity is of little help. Hopefully soon, he will be recognised for what he is and be allowed to grow into a role befitting his abilities because this up-and-down-the-batting-order philosophy isn't sustainable in the long run.

Even with the ball, there seems to be little constancy to thinking. In Ahmedabad against West Indies, he bowled just 10 overs in the game last month, which ramped up to 36 in Delhi in the next Test. In Kolkata last week, he got just one over in the first innings and none in the second, ostensibly because South Africa had a string of right-hand batters. But Washington's drift away from the right-handers has been a massive strength in his second coming, so why not give it a chance to express itself for more than six deliveries? Too many questions, too few answers. The good thing is that Washington isn't the one who's asking any of those. Just as well, did you say?

THE GIST

- Washington had a Test debut to remember, both for the fact that he was part of the group that created history by consigning Australia to their first loss at the Gabbatoir in more than three decades and that he played a significant hand in the three-wicket series-clinching victory
- In his first 21 Test innings, he batted at No. 6 once, at No. 7 six times, at No. 8 11 times and at No. 9 thrice. In that phase, he had four half-centuries and four other scores of more than 25
- Hopefully soon, he will be recognised for what he is and be allowed to grow into a role befitting his abilities because this up-and-down-the-batting-order philosophy isn't sustainable in the long run